

A Walthamstow Mugging In 1834

A trial at the Old Bailey on the 5th December 1834 before Justice Littledale and a Middlesex Jury.

JOHN EDWARDS, CHARLES FITZPATRICK and ROBERT MORGAN, were indicted for feloniously assaulting MARY ANN PRITCHARD, on the 3rd of October, at Layton, Essex, putting her in fear, and taking from her person, and against her will, 1 bag, value 6d.; 1 handkerchief, value 1s. 6d.; and 3 pence; the goods and monies of the said MARY ANN PRITCHARD

MARY ANN PRITCHARD.

I live at Layton, in Essex. On the 3d of October I was returning home with Mary Newcome, from Mr. Clark's on the Forest, at about half-past one o'clock in the middle of the day. At Phip's Cross, in Essex, the prisoner, EDWARDS, came up to me. He said nothing but pulled at my black silk bag, which I had over my arm. He pulled at it, but did not get it away from me; the string was twisted round my arm. When he could not get it, the prisoner, FITZPATRICK came and pulled at it. I did not know any of the prisoners before FITZPATRICK got it from me by calling out for a knife. I then let go of the bag.

Q. Who did he call to for a knife?

A. He called to one of them. He did not mention any name. The other two prisoners were on the other side of the road at the time. I twisted the bag off my arm when he called for a knife and he then snatched it from me, and put it in his hat. Then all three ran away. I had never seen them before. I can distinctly say it was them; all three of them. MORGAN was on the other side of the road when the other two were doing this. I did not see him do anything, he was standing still when FITZPATRICK took the bag from me. They were all three walking together before and all three went away together after taking the bag from me. There was a pocket handkerchief and 3d. in the bag. I saw the bag and handkerchief on Tuesday last at a public house, and knew them to be mine. Mr. May showed them to me. I saw the prisoners at Lambeth Street and knew them all again.

Cross-examined by MR. DOWLING.

Q. What time was this?

A. Half-past one in the day time. I saw no carriage or cart on the road.

Cross-examined by MR. PHILLIPS.

Q. Did the things belong to you?

A. Yes, it was a very sudden affair altogether. One of them cried out, "Bring me a knife", I do not exactly know what name he mentioned. He called out for a knife. I do not remember his saying "Jack," or any name. I was alarmed. MORGAN did not touch me he was across the road all the time and never attempted to approach me at all. It was done very quickly, without the least notice, or a word said to me.

MARY NEWCOME .

I was with Miss PRITCHARD between one and two o'clock, on the 3d of October. I saw three boys coming along. One of them crossed to the other side of the road and the next came up and took hold of Miss PRITCHARD's bag. He could not get it, and the next came up and caught hold of it. MORGAN crossed on the other side of the road. EDWARDS first took hold of the bag, and then FITZPATRICK came and took hold of it. He did not get it and called out for a knife; which frightened her so much. She let go of it directly. He got the bag, and put it into his hat and they all ran away together. I had never seen any of them before. I can speak positively to them. I saw them again at Lambeth Street Office, and knew them again.

Cross-examined by MR. PHILLIPS.

Q. What time altogether did this affair take?

A. About two or three minutes. I was very much alarmed, all three were together when I first saw them. At the time the violence was done, there were two on one side and one on the other. MORGAN did not attempt to touch her at all, The attempt was very sudden indeed, and without any warning. MORGAN was on the opposite side of the road at the time the reticule was taken.

BENJAMIN PRITCHARD

I am the father of MARY ANN PRITCHARD. On the 3d of October, I recollect her coming home and complaining to me, between one and two o'clock. Phips Cross is about half a mile from my house. I went in pursuit immediately on her arrival, as soon as I could ascertain what was the cause of her excitement. I was going along Walthamstow Common and there saw somebody going along. I did not know him. I went after him. I saw two more. They were calling each other. All three appeared to belong to one party. They met together in Walthamstow church-yard. Shortly after I went out I had called (for) assistance. Two of them were apprehended in the church-yard, and the third ran away after the two were apprehended. I pursued him myself, and, with assistance, took him. He was taken one or two fields off the common. The three prisoners are the three persons who were taken.

HUMPHREY MAY.

I live at Walthamstow. On the 3rd of October I heard a calling out of "Stop thief". I immediately went out, and saw MORGAN apprehended. When I returned after pursuing him, I found the other two had been apprehended but I had not seen them before. I found a reticule and a handkerchief in a ditch. There was a paper in the reticule, but no money. The ditch was in the direction the prisoners had run. FITZPATRICK and EDWARDS had run in that direction. I have the reticule and have had the charge of it ever since. I found a paper in it.

MARY ANN PRITCHARD re-examined.

This is my reticule, I know it, and know the handkerchief by a mark on it. They are both mine, and what were taken from me that day. This is the paper the halfpence were wrapped in, I believe.

EDWARD'S Defence.

On Friday morning I was at home, writing a sign-board for a person living on Stepney Green, and had just finished it, when Fitzpatrick called on me. He said MORGAN was waiting round the corner and wanted to speak to me. I went and put on my shoes, jacket, and hat, and went round the corner. I found MORGAN waiting for me. We all three went into Mile End-road. MORGAN asked me if I had any money, I said I had not and asked what he wanted it for. he said he had not had any victuals since the day before, except some bread and cheese. I went back and got him some bread and cheese and borrowed a few halfpence

of my mother. We then all three went to Hackney. In going over the bridge, we came in sight of two young ladies. One of them had a reticule. MORGAN asked me to go and snatch the reticule, as he thought there was some money in it; and if I could get it, to throw it to him, as he thought he should have no more victuals that day. I said I would not. He then took a large knife out of his pocket, laid hold of me by the collar, and swore if I did not he would run me through with it. He gave me the knife open, told me to cut the string of the reticule, and throw it to him. As I went to the two young ladies, I shut the knife and put it in my pocket. I merely snatched at the reticule and ran away. Shortly after this, FITZPATRICK came and told me to run away, or I should get into trouble. Directly after, I heard MORGAN call to FITZPATRICK to come on. He waited till FITZPATRICK came close to him and then he knocked FITZPATRICK'S hat off, and took the reticule out. He took something out of it, put it into his hand, jumped over the hedge, and I lost sight of him. FITZPATRICK said, "We had better make haste home, or we shall get into trouble". On going through Walthamstow churchyard, MORGAN came up to us again. He said he had a d——d good mind to knock my head off for being such a fool and directly after, I heard a cry of "Stop thief". In the prison, MORGAN said he did not care for this imprisonment, for it was not half so bad as the prison he was in the last time, he was in Newgate (Prison) for robbing a gentlemen but I never had any suspicion against me. I had not been led into this by MORGAN

FITZPATRICK'S Defence.

On Friday morning, the 3rd of October, I was going to work with my father. As I went to the docks I met MORGAN. He asked me where I was going. I said, "To work for my father". He asked me to accompany him to a gentleman at Walthamstow, who owed him some money. I said I could not. He said if I would go he would spend some money coming back. I did not know the character he bore, or I should have had nothing to do with him. As I knew my father could finish his work in two hours, I consented to go with him. We both went to the docks. When we came out he asked if I had any money to buy victuals, as he had nothing. I lent him 2d. He bought bread and cheese with it. We went along the Commercial Road and he told me to go and call for EDWARDS, as he did not wish to call himself, as his mother had forbidden him the door, and he wished to get something out of him. EDWARDS came to the door without shoes or hat on. I told him MORGAN was waiting for him. He went and put on his things, and came out. In Mile End-road, MORGAN asked EDWARDS if he had any money, as he had had nothing to eat except bread and cheese. He said he would get him some. He went back, brought him some bread and cheese and a few half-pence, and gave to him. He then asked EDWARDS to come with us to Walthamstow—we went through Hackney, over a bridge and by a dead wall we came in sight of two young ladies. One had a reticule. MORGAN said, "Go and seize the reticule, I think there is money in it, and I do not think I shall get anything to eat today". EDWARDS refused. MORGAN pulled out a knife, and swore if he did not he would run him through—Edwards took the knife in his hand—he made a snatch at the reticule, and ran away. MORGAN then said, "There is a d——d vagabond," and told me to go. I said I would not. He said he would run me through the head if I did not. I went and matched at it, but the lady held it. I called to MORGAN for a knife. She then let go, and I put it in my hat. I overtook EDWARDS, and told him to make haste home, or he would get into trouble. MORGAN came and took the reticule out of my hat. We went into the churchyard, and were taken into custody. Since we have been in custody MORGAN has said he did not care a d——n for the imprisonment, for the last time he was committed to Newgate for stealing a gold breast pin out of a gentleman's bosom. This is the first time I have been taken even on suspicion.

MORGAN'S Defence.

It is all false what they have been saying, they made it up of their two selves, since we have been in prison. EDWARDS and FITZPATRICK came to my house, and said, "Will you take a walk with me to my cousin's at Walthamstow?". I said I would go to the docks first, to see if there was any work for me. I went, and there was no work for me. I said I would go with them. Going along the road, EDWARDS saw two young ladies and said to me, "MORGAN, will you assist us in getting the young ladies' reticule?". I said, "No, I will have nothing to do with it; you won't carry on that game long; if that is your intention I shall leave your company". I ran away, and stood at a turning. I saw EDWARDS snatch at the reticule, He failed in getting it. FITZPATRICK seized it very violently, pulled it for a moment, then called to EDWARDS, "Jack, bring a knife". The young lady seemed terrified and let it go. I ran along the turning about two hundred yards, then looked behind me, and saw EDWARDS and FITZPATRICK scuffling together. I went on till I passed a gentleman. I then looked, and FITZPATRICK was running towards me. I ran and got over a hedge to avoid him and when I thought I was quite clear of them, I came out into the pathway into the churchyard, and who should I see, but EDWARDS and FITZPATRICK. FITZPATRICK seeing me, pointed me out, and said "There if that d——d vagabond". EDWARDS said to me, "Get out, you frightened fellow, I will serve you the same as I did FITZPATRICK". I said, "I do not want your company, I will get home as quick as I can". I have never been in custody before.

HUMPHREY MAY *re-examined.*

I took Edwards into custody. I believe the two men had ran in the way where I found the reticule in the ditch but I did not see them. I did not see MORGAN throw it away.

JURY. **Q.** *Was the bag found in the direction Morgan ran?*

A. *Yes. I had him in sight all the way, if he had thrown anything away I most have seen it.*

Q. *Was it in the space of ground he ran over after you first saw him, that it was found?*

A. *No.*

MARY ANN PRITCHARD *re-examined.*

EDWARDS made a match at my bag in the first instance and could not get it and then FITZPATRICK came and took hold of it. I did not observe whether EDWARDS said anything to FITZPATRICK before he came to take it.

MR. COPE.

I am governor of Newgate.(Prison) I know nothing whatever of MORGAN having been here on any charge.

FITZPATRICK

A gentleman at Lambeth Street said, "MORGAN, it is but a few months since you were here before for stealing a gold pin."

MR. COPE.

I had a man named David Jones, committed from Lambeth Street, for stealing a gold pin, but he was fifty years of age. I have been governor of Newgate upwards of twelve months.

CHARLES MORGAN .

I am the prisoner, MORGAN's, brother. My father once held a situation of respectability on the Corn Exchange, and left his family in rather narrow circumstances. My brother has been in America since his father's death. He was gone twelve or fourteen months. He then came home, and occasionally has had constant work. I got him a situation in two foundries, one was Griffin's iron foundry. He left there because there was not sufficient work for him. He endeavoured to support himself by getting work at the docks. He always bore an honest character, I never knew him taken up on any charge. Some friends promised to attend here for him, but are engaged in business.

GEORGE MORGAN .

I am also Morgan's brother. He went to America to try to better his fortune and since that, has endeavoured to support himself honestly. He has been employed at two foundries, and worked at the docks. He has always borne an honest, respectable character.

(Robert Soanes, A rope-maker, of Stepney, deposed to MORGAN's previous good character; John Gas, a carpenter; and Justin McCarthy, a painter, deposed to the same in behalf of EDWARDS.)

VERDICT

EDWARDS Aged 17. GUILTY— DEATH
FITZGERALD Aged 17. GUILTY— DEATH
MORGAN NOT GUILTY .

Some Notes

Geography & Places

Phipps Cross is the oldest name that we know for Whipps Cross.#

Walrhamstow Common was a large (26 acre) of land belonging to the Parish and people of Walthamstow.

Lambeth Street Police Office was in Whitechapel and was one of the seven Police Offices that were set up by the Middlesex Magistrates after 1792.

Newgate Prison was a prison sited opposite the Old Bailey in Newgate Street. It was used to hold prisoners waiting for their trials. The condemned men were kept in narrow somber cells that received little light.

What strikes me is the distance that the three young men walked. They all lived in Stepney but were happy to walk to Whipps Cross.and deviate to

Walthamstow Church Yard that was probably a pre-arranged rendezvous point if they got separated..

A Premeditated Crime

It seems likely that Charley Fitzpatrick and Jack Edwards deliberately went to Whipps Cross because it was some distance from their homes and they thought this would mean less chance of recognition and capture. What they didn't know was that around the corner from the church, was Walthamstow Parish Workhouse where local Watchmen were based.

Reticule

Mary Ann Pritchard was carrying a silk reticle. This was a small drawstring bag in which women carried personal possessions that she had wound around her arm. In earlier times she would have carried a pocket tied around her waist under her clothing and accessed via slits in her petticoat and gown. Its interesting that the reticle was only valued at 6d while the handkerchief was valued at 1s-6d. Because reticules and pockets were tied, pickpockets and thieves carried knives to cut them loose.

The Sentence

The two lads found 'Guilty' were sentenced to death. This means that they would be hung. However, for about 60% of offences punishable by the death sentence, the magistrates recorded that it had been carried out, then gave a less serious punishment. Neither of the two men are listed as being executed in the UK between 1834-7 (Neither do they appear on transportation records) so it is likely that they actually received lesser sentences.

The details of the trial are from: 'Proceedings of The Old Bailey'

<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18341205-202&div=t18341205->

[202&terms=WALTHAMSTOW#highlight](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18341205-202&terms=WALTHAMSTOW#highlight) I have provided some punctuation, put the actual words spoken by the participants in a different colour and font and added a few words in parenthesis. Otherwise, I have left the transcript to speak for itself.

Bill Bayliss

June2014