

INDISCRIMINATE SHOOTING.

Plough Monday Celebrations.

IN EXCITED ENGINE DRIVER.

At St. Ives Petty Sessions, on Monday, Daniel Saddington, engine driver, of Woodhurst, was charged with unlawfully wounding Walter Cowling, at Woodhurst, on January 9th.

Mr. J. P. Maule, of Huntingdon, prosecuted, and Mr. Wheeler, of St. Ives, defended.

George Furniss, labourer, of Woodhurst, said that on Monday, January 9th (Plough Monday), he had been round the village with others collecting money. Afterwards they went into the Half Moon and Star publichouse to share the money out. They left at 10 o'clock, and went towards the bottom end of the village, by the horse pond. When he got to Reynolds' shop he went back, and came across defendant and Mrs. Dickinson. Defendant had a tricycle, and was a little the worse for drink. Witness went with them to Mrs. Dickinson's house, which stood a little off the road. Defendant went and got his gun. Defendant came outside with the gun, and witness followed him on to the road. Witness did not know what defendant was going to do with the gun. It was a moonlight night, and when defendant got on to the road witness saw him place the gun to his shoulder and fire. It was in the direction of the head in the road. After firing, defendant said he "only fired across the field to frighten them." It was moonlight, and witness did not see anyone on the bend of the road when the gun was fired. He heard someone holla "Oh!" immediately after the shot. Saddington went back in the direction of the house, and witness saw nothing more of him that evening.

Cross-examined: It was moonlight when they came out of the house, and as far as he could see, there was no one down the road. If he thought that there was any danger to anyone he would have spoken to Saddington. Defendant, firing towards the right, was likely to catch the hedge. When he heard the word "Oh!" he did not think anyone was hurt, but only that someone was joking. He did hear someone afterwards say, "Jim's hit."

By the Bench: The young men had been gaming a bit with defendant before, and they had been an annoyance to him. The larking began in the publichouse before witness came out. There was no quarrel about the distribution of the money, as Saddington was not with them. The Bench then adjourned until 2.15.

Upon the resumption of the case, P.S. Maule gave evidence. Witness asked defendant if he had any explanation. He replied, "No, I shall say nothing. I have settled with Mr. Cowling, and Mrs. Cowling has been to see me, and they are not going to do anything." Witness saw Walter Cowling that day, and examined his right hand. There were nine marks across his hand, and five across his thumb, a little more than skin deep. They were like scratches, not very deep, from the little finger across to the thumb.

Walter Cowling stated that he went round with the others on Plough Monday. There had been no quarrel with defendant about anything. He stood just on the bend when he was struck. There were some trees there. It was the fright that made him fall down. Tom Furniss picked him up. He was able to walk home. When he got there he did not tell his father and mother, as he did not think it serious enough. He could see the shot when he got a light, and he got out three. He thought he was about 50 yards from the man who shot off the gun. He went to work as usual the next morning. His mother saw defendant, and they amicably settled the matter as far as he knew, and witness was satisfied. It was not his prosecution that day.

Frederick Ding, labourer, Woodhurst, said that he was one of the party who were with Cowling. When they heard the gun go off they all ran away, except Cowling, who fell down. They ran away because they were frightened.

Mr. Wheeler, for the defence, submitted that it was an accident. The marks on the inside of the hand showed that the shots went upwards, as though they had ricocheted from the granite. If it had been a direct shot there would have been shots in the thigh or leg as well.

The Bench retired. Upon their return, the Chairman said that the Bench had come to the conclusion that there was some evidence of intent, but not sufficient to go before a jury. They were of opinion that it was such that a jury would not convict upon; therefore they dismissed the case.

Mr. Maule asked the Bench to state a case, and they agreed to do this. There had been an argument as to whether the case was one of unlawful wounding or wounding with intent to do bodily harm.

FARMER'S BOWLS STOLEN