

## THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS: THE CRIME

Whilst coming from different backgrounds the four met in London when their paths crossed due to their involvement in the illegal activities of bare-knuckle prize fighting and gambling. Thurtell, Hunt and Probate all showed poor business acumen and went bankrupt.



Thurtell was the son of a successful merchant and Alderman, later Mayor, in Norwich. At 15 he joined the Navy but resigned after 5 years. His father set him up in business with his brother making bombazine (a twilled fabric). The business failed, the warehouse burned down, insurance was claimed, and arson was suspected. The brothers were involved in a fraud case at the time of the murder. Thurtell was a good amateur boxer and became a sports promoter, though gossip suggested that he was involved in fixed fights. He was dubbed 'the swell yokel' by the group of swindlers with whom William Weare was involved. In 1822 he was helping run The Cock Tavern, Haymarket.



Hunt was briefly manager of the Army and Navy Tavern which was frequented by Thurtell. He did not pay his suppliers and built up a pile of debts. He was made bankrupt. On release from Newgate Prison he relied on his good singing voice to provide him with support. He sang in bars and taverns in seaside resorts during the summer. In winter he worked in a coffee house in St Martins Lane frequented by Probate. He is thought to have become involved with a gang of swindlers.



The son of a respectable Herefordshire farmer he moved to London and worked as a clerk to a wine merchant. He married a brewer's daughter who brought him money and property and he set up as a wine merchant. The business failed and he was made a bankrupt. He was confined in the Kings Bench Prison, but robbed the prison coffee house till and was transferred to Brixton House of Correction. On release he moved his family to Radlett where he set up an illicit still. He joined them at weekends accompanied by friends who liked gambling, drinking and shooting.

### **WILLIAM WEARE**

A less well documented figure. He is variously described as a solicitor from Lyons Inn and a waiter from the Globe Tavern in Fleet Street who lodged in Lyons Inn. He was part of a gang of card swindlers attending race meetings, prize fights, spas and seaside resorts to fleece the unwary. He regularly attended gaming houses in London.