

THE RADLETT MURDER 24th OCTOBER 1823



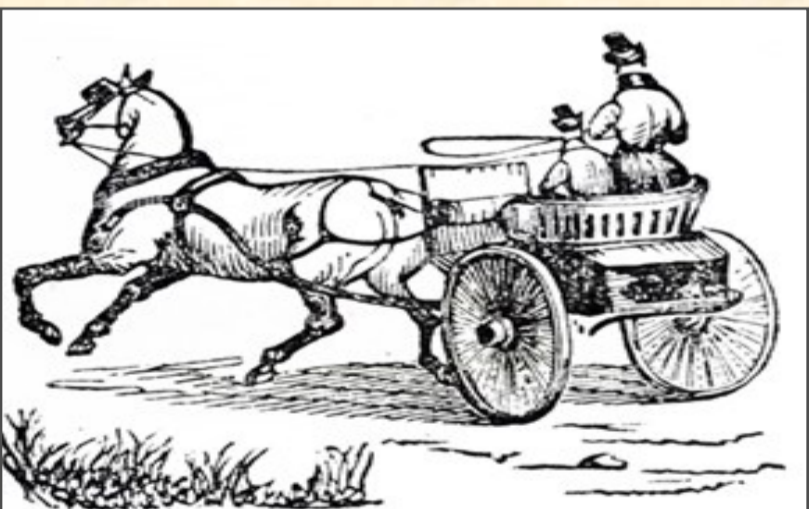
John Thurtell believed that William Weare had cheated him at cards of £300 (today worth £15300.)



Thurtell, with two friends, Joseph Hunt and William Probert, plotted to revenge this grievance by murdering William Weare.



Pretending to be friends they invited Weare to a shooting party at Probert's cottage in Gills Hill Lane, Radlett.



The four left London in two horse drawn gigs.



Probert and Hunt spent too long getting refreshments at inns en route to take part in the murder.



Thurtell decided to murder Weare by himself. He waited until he was in a secluded lane, either Loom Lane or Gills Hill Lane. He shot Weare in the face but did little damage.



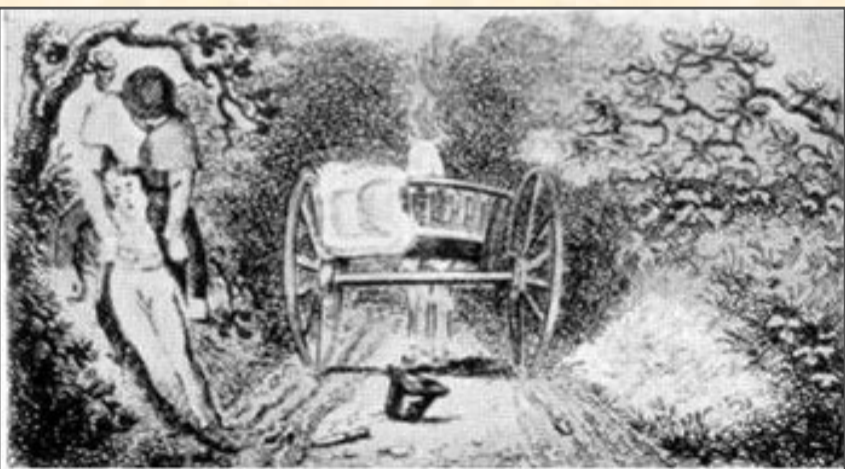
Thurtell, when nearly overpowered, cutting Weare's throat.

Weare tried to escape but Thurtell chased him and a fight ensued. Thurtell hit Weare in the head with the butt of his gun, drew a penknife, stabbed him and cut his throat.



... to make sure his victim was dead he pulled the trigger once ...

To make sure Thurtell shot him again.



JOHN THURTELL
(From an old print)

Thurtell pulled the body through a hedge. Assuming Weare carried large sums of money strapped to his body or secreted in his clothing, Thurtell looked for money. He inadvertently dropped his gun and penknife in a ditch.



Hunt and Probert met up with Thurtell. They decided to retrieve the body and dumped it in the pond at Probert's cottage.



They went into the cottage and sat down to supper and divided the spoils.

Early next morning the friends looked for the weapons but could not find them.



Two labourers found the weapons and the discovery was reported to the Watford Magistrates. The Bow Street Runners were asked to help.



Incriminating evidence was quickly found. Weare's olive green coat had been found in pieces in Scrubbits Spring Wood.

Thurtell's London rooms were searched and a gun identical to the one found in Radlett was discovered. The pair of pistols had been bought recently from a pawnbroker.



Getting worried the body might be found they moved it to Hill Slough, a pond near Medburn Bridge, Watling Street.



Thurtell, Hunt and Probate were arrested. The magistrates promised Hunt he would not be hanged if he revealed the location of the body. He decided to co-operate and the body was retrieved.



An inquest was held at the Artichoke Inn on Elstree Hill and the case was sent for trial.

The three defendants were moved to Hertford Jail.



Weare was buried in Elstree Church on the 1 November at 11pm on a stormy night. A large crowd turned up to watch.



The Trial started on the 6 January 1824.

Probert turned Kings evidence and was acquitted.

Thurtell and Hunt received the death penalty.

Hunt appealed his sentence.



Trial and sentences were widely published in the Press. Large crowds gathered in Hertford to watch the hanging of Thurtell on 9 January 1824.



Thurtell was the first man to be hanged using the new “drop gallows”.