

BARBARIANS AT WHITEWELL.

Preston Chronicle, May, 2, 1874



The Preston Improvement Act of 1869, granted the Preston Corporation the power to draw water from the Langden and Hareden streams in the Trough of Bowland. Work commenced in 1869 and by 1874 it was estimated that upwards of 300 navvies were employed on the project, and a "new settlement", had been formed in the Whitewell area. A number of farms were rented for use as lodging houses, one of which was New Hey. It was here that the reported "Riots and Diabolical Outrages", took place.

George Holden was employed by the Preston Corporation as lodging house keeper at New Hey. It would appear that, not content with this as his sole occupation, he also sold beer without a license to the navvies. It was also rumoured that "damsels of somewhat questionable reputation" were kept on the premises. At the time of the reported incident, probably in the April of 1874, Holden had gone with his wife to Preston, leaving his father-in-law and a servant girl in charge of the house. In his absence the navvies broke open barrels of beer and after drinking their fill, proceeded to smash the contents of the house to pieces.

In the aftermath five men were arrested and the following is an account of their trial, exactly as reported in the Preston Chronicle and the Preston Guardian, in May 1874.

The Prisoners Before the Magistrate

"On Tuesday morning five men were brought up at the Bolton-by-Bowland police court charged with being concerned in the robbery of £20 and doing damage to the extent of £70. The names of the men were George Pendlebury (the ganger), Robert Singleton, James Blezzard, Thomas Bleasdale and Joseph Gardner. - Mr. Anderton and Mr. Baldwin appeared for the prosecution and Mr. Eastham of Clitheroe for the prisoners. The magistrates sitting were G.T.B. Trappes and John Howarth Esq. The court was full of listeners and proceedings lasted four hours. Mr. Anderson applied for a remand on the ground that one of the most important witnesses was in the Infirmary with a broken leg. This was opposed by Mr. Eastham and the case was proceeded with".

George Holden said, "I am a lodging house keeper and I reside at New Hey, Whitewell in the higher division of the township of Bolland. On Monday the 11th,

I went from home on business and left my wife, her father and a servant girl in charge of the house. On Wednesday following I sent for my wife to come to me at Preston. I was looking out for a situation. I told her to leave her father and the servant girl in charge of the house until we returned on Saturday. When I was returning on Saturday I met some of the lodgers in Longridge. They gave me a statement about the condition of my house, but I went forward to Chipping. When I got there I met some more who persuaded me to go no further. They said Pendlebury was there with a lot of men and they were racking the house and turning everything upside down. I stopped there until Monday and I went up to the house. When I looked round I found everything smashed-pans, and kettles all broken and not a pot whole in the house. Chests of tea were squandered about. An eight day clock kicked to pieces. I could only find a portion. All the windows were smashed. The beds were all upside down. Large pieces of beef lying about having been trampled upon. The fowls were all killed and part of them part boiled and some were stolen. The hens that was part boiled was