Highway robbery —by constables

By Will O' Whispers

Highway robbery conjures up a picture of Dick Turpin ambushing stagecoaches on moonlit roads in England. Well, here's an exciting story about two Cardiganshire highwaymen who were parish constables!

About 8 p.m. on Thursday, 20 January, 1825, David Owen was riding on horseback from Carmarthen to Abertystwyth. When near Cribyn he met two men who asked him to help them as they were travellers and wanted money to pay for lodgings. Mr. Owen tried to ride on, but one of the two seized the horse's bridle to stop Mr. Owen.

Chief Constable Howell Evans, who reported the incident years later, used a quaint language to describe what happened, and I shall stick to his exact words: "Mr. Owen struck the man on the hand which held the reins with a stick. The other man took hold of the rider's arms and instantly pinned him quite securely behind.

"They told him that because he refused them help, they would have all his money and proceeded to search his pockets."

Chief Constable Evans said the thieves made off with nearly £100 and disappeared over a hedge towards Lampeter. He went on: "Mr. Owen, owing to the horse being tied, was unable to guide his horse.

"When passing some houses on the roadside, he called out with all the strength he possessed for assistance, but to no purpose until Talsarn village was reached.

"The landlord of the public house at the village had gone to bed, but fortunately the servant girl happened to be standing at the front door. On hearing the screams, she stopped the horse and cut the cord with a knife."

"The cord had a noose at each end, which clearly proved that the robbers were well-prepared for the robbery in case their plan failed.

was generally known that the robbery had been committed by two parish constables, who were also looked upon as expert highwaymen.

"But the people of the district were too timid to give any information against them and so the constables were allowed to remain in post the next year without being interfered with."

"They continued to pursue their plundering practices for many years." ~~~

Chief Constable Evans related the story of this robbery in a booklet published in 1900 entitled "A Retrospect of the 19th Century relating to crime and prevention, administration of justice and the organisation of the police force." This can be consulted in the public library at Abertystwyth.

He used it to illustrate the lawlessness in Cardiganshire before the Cardiganshire Constabulary was established in 1844 (Abertystwyth had its own police force from 1837). Parish constables had been appointed previously, but were very inefficient.

Four persons in Cardiganshire were executed for the crime of highway robbery between 1800 and 1822, and there were numerous cases of highway robbery where the robbers got away.

Chief Constable Evans held office from 1891 until 1904. He was a former detective-inspector in the former Carmarthenshire Constabulary.

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MERMAID

You don't really believe in mermaids, do you? It is recorded that in 1826 a farmer from Llanychaearn and his family saw a mermaid on the rocks and in the sea.

She looked like a girl of about 18, with short dark hair, a beautiful face and white skin.

When she bent to raise water in her hand to wash her face, the farmer and his wife also saw her and

Later Generation