

## **HISTORICAL DOCUMENT**

### **Charles Wheatstone on the Police Blotter**

NOTES BY ALLAN ATLAS

Bad things happen! Even to our heroes! Thus did the young (sixteen-year-old) Charles Wheatstone (1802-1875) fall victim to a crime! But every cloud has a silver lining: it was a flute—*not* a concertina—that was stolen from his home, and that for a very good reason: the crime took place on 17 March 1818, that is, likely before the concertina was even a glimmer in Sir Charles's mind (the Wheatstone family manufactured flutes at the time.)

The following account of the Old Bailey proceedings speaks for itself and is drawn from *The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, London 1674 to 1834*: 'The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, Ref: t18180401—28', online at [www.oldbaileyonline.org/htmo\\_units/1810s/1810s/t18180401—28.html](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/htmo_units/1810s/1810s/t18180401—28.html) (accessed 29 December 2005; note that we could no longer access this on 3 May 2008.)

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557. SAMUEL CROUCH and JAMES BULL were indicted for stealing, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March [1818], one flute, value 3£, the goods of Charles Wheatstone, in his dwelling-house.

MOSES HARRIS [testimony]. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of March, about seven o'clock in the morning, I met the prisoner, Crouch, in Great Marylebone-street, and asked him if he had any thing to sell? I knew him before. He said he would take me where there were some things to sell. He took me to Marylebone-mews, and sold me the flute and other things. As I was going along Holborn, I went into a music-shop, to ask the value of it. A boy, who was there claimed it as his master's—"Wheatstone, Strand," was stamped on it. Bull was present when I bought it, and said he sold it to Crouch.

EDMUND BRYAN [testimony]. I am servant to Mr. Wheatstone. I was in Mr. Oxley's shop, in Holborn. A man came into the shop with the flute, I claimed it, and the man beckoned to Harris. He then came in.

WILLIAM CLEMENTS [testimony]. I apprehended the prisoner and found a 1£ note on Bull.

MOSES HARRIS [testimony]. I know this to be one of the notes I paid him by a blot.

(Property produced and sworn to.) NOT GUILTY.

Second Middlesex Jury, before Lord C.J. Ellenborough.