

**Petitions.** <sup>1</sup>

**Received 27 October 1848**

To The Right Honorable  
Sir George Grey Baronet  
Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Home Department

The Memorial of the undersigned Inhabitants of the Parish of Stratton Saint Margaret in the County of Wilts, and elsewhere

Humbly sheweth

That William Seymour late of Stratton Saint Margaret aforesaid was indicted at the Assizes held at Abingdon in and for the County of Berks on the 13th day of July last for feloniously receiving certain Stolen Goods and was thereupon found Guilty and sentenced to be transported for the term of Fourteen years.

That your Memorialists have known the said William Seymour for many years past, during which period he has resided at Stratton Saint Margaret aforesaid, and has carried on business as a Coal Merchant and Seller of Beer by retail, and has been hitherto considered by your Memorialists as a man of honest character.

That from their knowledge of the said William Seymour's previous character for honesty they are of opinion that the punishment of Transportation for Fourteen Years is severer than the case, all circumstances being considered, in equity demands, and that the ends of justice will be sufficiently secured by a material mitigation of his sentence.

Your Memorialists therefore humbly request that you will be pleased to recommend Her Majesty to extend her royal mercy to the said William Seymour in any manner and degree which to her royal pleasure shall seem meet.

And your Memorialists as in duty bound will ever pray.

(Signed) Charles Nesfield, Clerk, Vicar of Stratton St Margaret aforesaid

5 September 1848.

Signed by 50+ residents, including Richard Tilley who may be the father of Richard Iles, the co-accused.

One person said: I George Hiskins(?) of Lyneham Wilts, Barge Master and Corn Dealer do certify that William Seymour was formerly in my imploy(sic) as Boatman for Five or Six years and conducted himself as an Honest Servant.

Sir, I was on the Jury at Abingdon at William Seymours trial, and it was the will of the Jury to find Wm Seymour guilty(sic) but recommend him to mercy, the foreman said it would not make any Difference as he would not have about twelve months imprisonment, and did not name it to the Judge.

and am Your Obedient Servant

Edwd Francome

October 21, 1848, Step Farm Farrington

Cover. 22 October 1848

David Archer Esq, Kingdown House

Wilts

October 20, 1848

Holten Farm, Farringdon

Sir, having received a letter from respecting Seymore i was foreman of the Jury on his trial and all the jury thought is punishment very heavy and we should reckomend him to mercy.

yours truly, Thos Adams

To D Archer Esq, Kindsdown house

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<sup>1</sup> HO18/251

**Received 29 November 1848**

Swindon, 28 Nov 1848

Sir,

I have been requested to apply in behalf of one William Seymour who was committed at Abingdon in June last for purchasing stolen goods & was sentenced to fourteen years transportation.

I understand that a petition in favour of his case (most respectably signed) was forwarded to you for your inspection & also that the foreman of the Jury has omitted to make known to the Judge Patterson their unanimous recommendation to mercy, the prisoner now he's in Reading Gaol, will you kindly oblige me with a reply to this communication

& I am, Sir

Your obedient Servant

A.L. Goddard

The Lawn

Tuesday

Cover: William Seymour. It is stated that the foreman of the Jury omitted to make known to the Judge their unanimous recommendation of the prisoner to mercy.

**Received 27 October 1848**

Kingsdown House

Swindon, Wilts

Sir,

Mrs Seymour the wife of William Seymour who is now in Abingdon Gaol under sentence of transportation for 14 years will forward to you by this night's post a letter which I received from the foreman of the jury. She has requested me to bear testimony to the truth of the letter being really written by the foreman of the jury. I enclose you a copy of the letter which elicited his answer.

I am yours obediently

David Archer

To the Right Hon. Sir George Grey

**Received 27 October 1848**

Kingsdown House, October 3, 1848

Sir,

At the earnest request of Mrs Seymour, the wife of William Seymour who is now under sentence of transportation for fourteen years, I have promised to testify if her statement prove to be correct, that the Jury (of which you the foreman) desired you to recommend the prisoner to the mercy of the court but that you omitted to do so.

Will you be kind enough to tell me if such is the fact, and whether the Jury was unanimous in their recommendation to mercy.

I am Sir,

Yours obediently

David Archer

Kingsdown House, Swindon, Wilts

October 20, 1848

Holton Farm, Farringdon

Sir having Received a letter from Respecting Seymoure i was foreman of the Jury on his Tryal and all the Jury thought is punishment very heavy and we should Reckomend him to mercy.

Yours truly, Thos Adams.

to D Archer Esq, Kingsdown house

Cover: 251/34

William Seymour, 40,

Berks Summer Assizes, July 1848

Receiving Stolen Goods, 14 years transportation

Gaol Report - Character not known

The Jury think the sentence too severe, & perhaps it may be so but no mitigating evidence.... was stated. Nil HW

The object of this application as to shew that it was the intention of the Jury to recommend the prisoner to mercy but that the Foreman omitted to do so - A representation is also made as to his good character & the severity of the sentence.

Answered 16 December 1848

**Received 12 April 1849**

Portland Place 12 April 1849

Sir,

The Statement, which is made for the first time in the Papers presented by Sir Fred Thesiger "that the wife of William Seymour had inadvertently bought the stolen Property on the 8th of April 1848; and that he had left Home early on that Day and did not return for several days", does not consist with the Evidence in Support of the Prosecution or with William Seymour's Defence at the Trial.

It appears by the Testimony of Thomas Goodman the Prosecutor, that in the Night of the 7th of April 1848 his House had been broken and entered, and amongst other Property, 2 knives, 5 Pencil Cases, 3 Brooches, 3 Rings, Party of a Coat Stud, a Scarf pin and a Purse stolen from his Shop.

On the 3 of June following the Prisoners House was searched: and on that occasion some of the above mentioned articles were found there at the top of the Staircase under a Heap of old Clothes, and the Rest of them in his Bedroom. On being told they were Part of the Goods stolen from Mr Goodman, he said in the presence of 4 Witnesses, all of whom were examined at the Trial, that he and his wife had had them for years.

This Representation is not consistent with his Wife having inadvertently bought them in his Absence two Months only before the 3rd of June.

Neither was the Defence more consistent with that supposed Purchase. For Seymour, seeing that after the Prosecutor had positively identified the Articles as Part of the Goods taken from the Shop on the Night of the 7th of April, he could have little Chance of persuading the Jury, that his Representation to the Constable, who had searched his House, was true, called two Witnesses to prove, that he in his own Taproom in the afternoon of the 8th of April (one of the Witnesses saying he was sure it was the 8th, as it was the Saturday after Wadely Fair, which was held on the 6th of April) bought for thirty shillings the Articles of one Stroud, who came with the Taproom pulled them from his pocket and pressed him, Seymour, to buy them, as he, Stroud, had taken a House at Bath and wanted some ready Money.

If the statement of John Habgood is true and his Belief well founded: why did the prisoner falsely represent to the searching Officers that he and his Wife had the Articles for years? and why did he produce two ..... Witnesses at the Trial?

I think that the Friends of the Prisoner have imposed on Sir Fred Thesiger & that the Conviction is right.

I have the Honor to remain

Sir, Your most obedient humble Servant

T J Platt

Cover: Mr Baron Platt is of opinion that the conviction is right, & that Sir F Thesiger has been imposed upon.

Q.7 Inform Sir F Thesiger that the Case now set up is quite inconsistent with the evidence & with the Prisoners own Case at his Trial. HW. GG.

I John Habgood (Builder) of Stratton St Margaret's, Wilts, beg to State that I live opposite, and very near the residence of William Seymour, who is now a prisoner at Millbank Westminster, in consequence of certain articles having been met with his house, which were identified by Thomas Goodman of Uffington, Berks, as his property, and of which he alleged he had been recently robbed. I beg to state that I saw the said William Seymour leave his residence and set off upon a journey early on the 8th of April 1848, and as I know he did not return home for several days, it was utterly impossible that he could know anything of the purchase, of a person of the name of Towser, or Stroud, and which articles were afterwards claimed by the aforesaid Thomas Goodman, as his property; And I conscientiously believe that Elizabeth Seymour purchased the said

articles of the said Towser, or Stroud, quite unwittingly, not having the least suspicion that he had dishonestly acquired it.

John Habgood  
Stratton St Margaret's  
March 21, 1849

We the undersigned believe John Habgood to be a conscientious person who would not state what he does not believe to be true.

Charles Nesfield, Vicar, David Archer and Abbot Large, Churchwardens of Stratton St Margaret near Swindon, Wilts.

Cover: William Seymour, 3rd Application

The statements contained in these papers certainly give time ..... to what was before a mere statement of the wife. ....

Sir Frederic Thesiger sends papers tending to shew that the stolen property was purchased by the prisoner's wife without..... knowledge during his absence from home; & asks for a further investigation into the case.

Ask for a report

Answered 18 April 1849. GG

William Willoughby and James Weybury, both of Shrivenham, Berks; late in the employ of the Great Western Railway Company, at their Station, at Shrivenham, aforesaid' hereby admit, that we were employed at the said station, on May 9th, 1848, when an accident occurred there, and several persons were killed.

On a mere surmise, that, possibly we were at the time of the accident, inattentive to some of the rules and regulations of the Company, we were taken before certain Magistrates, by whom we were committed to Abingdon Gaol, and subsequently, to Devizes Gaol; but the Grand Juries, at both the said places refused to find Bills against us, and we were set to liberty.

We were taken from Reading, to be tried at Devizes for the same alleged offence (one of the unfortunate sufferers having died in Wiltshire) on Sunday, August 13th, 1848, and immured in the Prison, at Devizes; the following day, we, with other prisoners were taken from the prison, to the Hall, to take out trial - Not being tried on the Monday, we were taken back to the Prison, and brought up again to the Hall, the next day; when (as no Bill was found against us) we were set at liberty, and allowed to return to our homes.

As William Seymour, and a shoemaker, Known by the names of Towser, and Stroud, (he being sometimes addressed as Towser, and at other times as Stroud) were among the Prisoners who were brought up from Devizes Prison to the Hall, on both days aforesaid, to be tried, we had many opportunities of speaking to them, and of hearing the said Towser, or Stroud, and Seymour converse together. Towser, or Stroud, we understand was suspected of having stolen an umbrella, which, (it was alleged) he sold to the said Seymour; the latter having reason to believe it was stolen property; whereas, we heard the said Towser, or Stroud, many times, strongly affirm, that the said William Seymour neither bought the Umbrella of him, nor knew of the Umbrella having left at his house, as he (Seymour) was not home at the time. The said Towser, or Stroud, repeatedly said, in our hearing, that he called at the said Seymour's house and ordered some Beer, and he drank several pints thereof; when, as he had no money, he requested the said Seymour's wife (Elizabeth) to take the Umbrella, and keep it as security for the money he owed her for the beer he had just had, and that the said Elizabeth Seymour took the Umbrella into her possession, to keep it, until Towser, or Stroud, paid her for the beer he had drunk without paying for, at the time he drank it.

William Seymour (on the evidence of Towser, or Stroud, as we understood and believe) was found 'not guilty'.

During the said Monday, and Tuesday, we also heard the said Towser, or Stroud, many times endeavour to console the said William Seymour (who was in great distress) by reminding him that he (Wm Seymour) was perfectly innocent of the Burglary at the House of Thomas Goodman, at Uffington, Berks; and also of having bought any of the stolen property claimed by the said Thomas Goodman, for which latter crime, the said Wm Seymour had been recently tried, and sentenced by the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Baron Platt to be transported.

The said Towser, or Stroud, many times, in our hearing, told the said William Seymour, "you are an innocent man; I sold the articles to your wife (which were afterwards identified by the aforesaid Thomas Goodman as his property) when you were from home, and was allowed for the said articles, by your wife

(as we understood) Thirty Shillings.

The said William Seymour, was only occasionally at home; his business as Barge master, water carrier, carrier and seller of Coal; Corn, &c, &c; took him, and kept him from home a great deal of his time.

To the truth of the preceding Statements, we are willing to Swear

James Weybury

William Willoughby (his mark)

March 9th, 1849

Shrivenham Berks.

Witness: Edwd Tull

**Received 29 March 1849**

Temple, 28 March 1849

Dear Waddington

I am afraid you will think me rather troublesome with respect to Convict William Seymour but having received the accompanying papers in his case with a request that I could forward them to the Home Office I do so accordingly. Of course it is always right upon these occasions to refer to the Judge for his opinion as to the property of the conviction & which course was adopted by Sir George Grey on my previous communication, but the facts detailed in these additional papers seem to me to raise a question rather for enquiry by the Executive - If the circumstances are true Seymour might not to be punished further.

I trust you will consider it right that a further investigation should take place.

I remain, Yours faithfully, Fred Thesiger

**Received 5 February 1849**

Temple, 5 February 1849

My dear Waddington

I have been requested by persons who have a right to submit the favor from me, to recommend to the notice of the Home Office a Petition which has been presented for a mitigation of the sentence passed on William Seymour who was tried by Baron Platt & convicted (I presume from the statement made to me) of receiving stolen goods - of course the only ground upon which I can ask for mercy to be extended to him must be upon some favourable circumstances which have appeared since his conviction. It is represented to me that his wife states that when her husband was from home she purchased unwarily from a stranger the articles in question not knowing that he had become improperly possessed of them, & paying the fair market price for them. Of course if this is true no Evidence could have been given of it at the trial, as the wife could not be a witness, & yet the convicted man would be entirely innocent. I do not presume to express any opinion as to the truth or probability of the story, all I ask is that the matter may be investigated, whatever result may follow from it. You will I am sure understand the extent to which I feel justified in my interference, & will not suppose that I am Soliciting anything which is not in strict accordance with the demands of justice.

Believe me, my dear Waddington

Yours very sincerely

Fred. Thesiger

Cover. William Seymour, 2nd Application

This has been already referred to the Judge who reported unfavourably. I do not see now enquiring can be made as to the truth of the Wife's statement. Nil HW

Answered 16 February 1849

**Received 11 December 1848**

29 Portland Place'8 December 1849

Sir, Baron Rolfe, to whom your letter of the 10th November last upon the Subject of the petition, presented on behalf of William Seymour, was by Mistake addressed, has transferred it, as well as the petition and the four accompanying Documents, to me, before whom the Convict was tried at the last Berkshire Assizes.

In Answer to the Requisition contained in that Letter, I have the Honor to state the following Observations.

The Petitioners do not express any Doubt of Seymours Guilt: but formed their Appeal upon his previous good Character and the unnecessary Rigor of his Sentence. The Sentence is severe. But the Crime, of he was found guilty, is of a most mischeivous Character. The encouragements, afforded by a Receiver of Stolen Goods to so many to become Thieves and to so many old Thieves to pursue more zealously their Depredations upon the Property of Her Majesty's subjects, and the Difficulty of his Detection, combine to render him a proper Subject of more severe penal consequences, than those, which would be inflicted upon n ordinary thief. In this particular Case the Convict had peculiar Opportunities of extending his mischeivous Influence. He kept a public House. In Houses of that Description the experience of Jail Deliveries shews that all the dissipated and Dishonest of our poorer fellow Subject are too often found on a Saturday Night, wasting the means of subsisting their Wives and Children and preparing themselves for nocturnal Deprivation.

Had the Jury recommended him to Mercy: I should still have thought it my Duty, in order to deter others from the Commission of the like Offence, to pass the same Sentence: and I regret to say that I cannot extract from the Letters and Petition any Ground for its Mitigation.

I have the Honor to remain, Sir

Your obedient humble Servant

T.J Platt [Thomas Joshua Platt]

To the Right Hon<sup>ble</sup>

Sir George Grey Bart

Her Majesty's Secretary &c &c

Cover: Report on the case of William Seymour

Mr Baron Platt can discover grounds for mitigation of the sentence in this case.

Nil HW, GG

Answered 16 December 1848.

### **Received 25 February 1850**

Honourable Sir,

I beg with the greatest deference permission to deliver the accompanying Testimonial in favor of William Seymour, from his Prosecutor, who is become very anxious to do the unfortunate prisoner the justice to which he considers him entitled, being now fully satisfied that he was not implicated in the Burglary and Robbery at the Prosecutors house, at Uffington, Berks, nor of the guilty possession of any of the prosecutor's property: and for which alleged crime or crimes, he is now a prisoner at Pentonville Prison, under Sentence of Transportation.

I beg, Honor<sup>ble</sup> Sir, to state, that I have taken great pains to obtain an acquaintance with William Seymour's case, and that I find it impossible to come to a different conclusion than that now expressed by the Prosecutor, Mr Thomas Goodman, in the within Testimonial, namely, "that William Seymour had nothing to do with the burglary and robbery at the Prosecutor's house, nor with the purchase of any part of the property which was then stolen". And I beg, Honorble Sir, to add that the prisoner had nothing to do with concocting the defence which was set up at the Trial, which was entirely the act of the Agent employed by a relation of the prisoner who took upon him to instruct the said agent; and that any discrepancy between the said defence and what has been subsequently stated, is attributable to the defence having been proposed by persons at a distance, and without having communication with the prisoner.

I remain, Honor<sup>ble</sup> Sir,

With upmost deference

Your most obed<sup>t</sup>, humble Servant

J Mountford

Lord of the Manor of South Marston, Wilts

February 23, 1850.

To, The Right Honourable Sir George Grey Bart

Secretary of State &c, &c, &c

Tight Honourble Sir, Thomas Goodman, of Uffington, Berks being the person who Prosecuted William Seymour of Stratton St Margaret, Wilts, and now a prisoner at Pentonville Prison: Beg, with the greatest

deference to represent to you, Right Honorable Sir, that having become acquainted with facts which shew clearly that William Seymour could not have been implicated in the Burglary and Robbery at my house nor of the purchase of any of my property; the article found in his house, having, it is quite clear, been unwittingly bought y his wife of a customer who owed her money, whilst William Seymour was from home. The said person has subsequently been transported for some crime committed by him: and before he left this country he shewed a great desire to exculpate William Seymour from the guilt of burglary and robbery, and of the purchase of any part of the property taken from the house.

As I am, Right Honorable Sir, satisfied that William Seymour had nothing to do with the burglary and robbery at my house, nor with the purchase of my lost property, and as has been a long time deprived of his liberty; whereby his business has greatly suffered for want of his personal superintendence; I intreat, Right Honorable Sir, that you will be pleased to recommend to Her Most Gracious Majesty, our beloved Queen, to grant the early liberation of the unfortunate William Seymour.

I beg, Right Honorable Sir, to inform you that it is understood and believed that William Seymour knew little, or nothing of the defence which his illiterate friends had prepared and which was made use of at his trial.

I remain: Right Honorable Sir, with the profoundest deference, and respect;

Your most obedient; humble Servant

Thomas Goodman

Uffington, Berks, Jan 5th, 1850

Cover:

William Seymour

4th Application Pentonville

See the Judge's Report. If he chose to call ..... into as per at the trial he must take the consequences.

Nil GG

The prosecutor expresses his belief in the prisoners innocence, and prays that he may be released

Answered 4 March 1850.