

Sheldon's conviction as a recusant, Worcester Assizes 1587

The anonymous account of Sheldon's conviction at the Assizes in Worcester
September 1587

CSPD 1581-90, p.449, no. 83; SP 12/206/, f.175, undated

Upon all the Grand Jury finding of all the recusants mentioned in the indictments (except only Mr Sheldon) it was by the court demanded the cause if there were stay for him. And the Grand Jury answered that one of their own company could testify that Mr Sheldon had been at church within the year.

At another coming of the jury with indictments they said another could testify for Mr Sheldon. And that person examined said that he about a year past or more certainly he could not remember he went with Mr Sheldon to a parish church and left Mr Sheldon there before service began. And whether Mr Sheldon stayed service there or not he could not say. That testimony was by the court declared not to be sufficient. And so the Grand Jury went together again with that and other indictments.

Then the Chief Baron¹ said openly in hearing of all the people to the High Sheriff² sometime being servant to Mr Sheldon's father and a great familiar of Mr Sheldon that many of the servants of Mr Sheldon then were at the same Assizes. If any of them would testify upon their oath that they had seen Mr Sheldon at Common Prayer in any parish church or chapel accustomed for Common Prayer within one year last past he should be heard and the Grand Jury discharged.

Then one a steward or chief servant³ of Mr Sheldon came forth and being examined could not testify anything within a year but that Mr Sheldon about --- years past was bound in great bond before the Lords of the Privy Council for coming to church as they had prescribed him.⁴ And he did think Mr Sheldon did observe the same and would not forfeit his bond. That testimony also was by the court declared not to be sufficient.

And besides it was by the Lord Chief Baron said in open court that many other of Mr Sheldon's servants then were at the said Assizes. If any of all those or any other would avouch upon oath that within a year Mr Sheldon had been in any church or chapel one time at Common Prayer it should be sufficient. And none would so do.

Lastly it was by the Chief Baron in open court said to the High Sheriff that was known he was a dear friend and great familiar with Mr Sheldon if he would be a vouchee upon oath that he had within a year seen Mr Sheldon in any church or chapel at Common Prayer but once it should be admitted to be sufficient and to discharge the Grand Jury thereof. Who answered

¹ Sir Roger Manwood, one of the two Assize Justices.

² William Childe.

³ Probably John Bould; no trace of a bond for good behaviour dating from 1581 has been found, only the bond for his appearance in London, *APC 12 1580-81*, p. 166.

⁴ The sentence is true if interpreted only as meaning the bond for his appearance when summoned before the Council in August 1580.

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that he could not say anything in that behalf. And afterwards did say to the Chief Baron he wished Mr Sheldon would in that matter conform himself.

Upon all which circumstance and in that Mr Sheldon was to the Council thought nothing to be under bond the Grand Jury thus protracting time until the last day of the Assizes and near the end of that day were by the Chief Baron charged to find the indictment for the Queen unless they had other evidence, or else he would inquire of their concealment according to the laws. And they going together again with that and other indictments at last did find the same indictment against him as well as they had found against the other recusants.

[Back to Contents >>](#)