

Do you think that dic
penderyn was
unjustly hanged?
essay



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In this essay I intend to examine the court case and subsequent execution of Richard Lewis alias Dic Penderyn. I will look at all the evidence presented to the court and decide whether he was guilty as charged or whether the case should have been acquitted for lack of substantial evidence. To begin I will give you a little information on why the Rising first took place. Richard Crawshay, the Iron Master, began sacking his skilled workers because he was unable to pay their wages. Gwyn A Williams, an historian who specialises in Merthyr said;” Merthyr was already hit by the slumps.

Wages were falling, hundreds going on poor relief; the debtors’ court (the Court of Requests), run by shopkeepers, was busy confiscating goods from destitute workmen. Crawshay, with his massive capital, was able to keep his wages up...but, in May, he, too, pushed through a wage cut..

. Into this disturbed community came the propaganda of the reform struggle...Leaders began to emerge from the crowds, men like Thomas Llwelyn.

.. and Lewis Lewis, known as Lewsyn yr Heliwr...At a great meeting on the Waun (30 May),.

.. demands for Reform were directly linked to local grievances, in particular, the debtors’ court. Crowds scoured the town, seizing goods which had been confiscated from the destitute and restoring them to their original owners..

. The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders marched first coming in from Brecon. On 3rd June, at a tumultuous meeting outside the Castle Hotel, the magistrates were shouted down and, led by Lewis Lewis, the crowd attacked

the soldiers. After a desperate hand-to-hand struggle, the Highlanders opened fire.

It took eight minutes of firing to clear the streets. Even then the rioters rallied and opened fire on the inn with captured muskets. Ultimately, the troops pulled out to shelter in Penydarren House. There they were besieged for three days, as Merthyr fell to the rioters." During the Rising Dic Penderyn was accused of bayoneting Donald Black, a Private in the 93rd regiment, at the Castle Inn on the 3rd June 1831.

As a result he was accused of attempted murder and put on trial for this charge at Cardiff Courts. I will firstly begin examining the evidence presented by the prosecution to the court. The first witness called to give evidence was James Abbott, a Hairdresser in Merthyr." I was sworn in a special constable 3rd March...

I saw Lewis Lewis after the men went into the house, the Castle Inn...I saw Lewis Lewis hanging onto the lamp iron.

.. addressing the mob-I observed a rush from the mob upon the soldiers...

I was stationed in the passage of the Inn...I saw a soldier coming to the steps - saw him struggle with two or three others to keep the musket - which he lost. Richard Lewis was one..

. The soldier that had lost his musket was making his way into the Inn... Richard Lewis charged him with a bayonet and made an incision in the thick part of the thigh.

.. I have not the slightest doubt of the person I saw “ The evidence presented by James Abbott is strong and convincing and could be a reliable source as it is from a witness who saw it with his own eyes. He states clearly “ I have not the slightest doubt of the person I saw “.

James Abbott is a respected person in the community of Merthyr and as a Special Police Constable the evidence that he gives proves that the defendant Richard Lewis is guilty of attempted murder on Private Donald Black. The second person to give evidence for the prosecution was James Drew.” I saw Richard Lewis wrestling with a soldier and one or two more – he pushed the bayonet at his thigh.” The evidence presented by James Drew also contains reliable, primary evidence, which puts the defendant Richard Lewis at the scene of the crime and also corroborates the evidence given by James Abbot.

The third witness called to the stand by the prosecution was Thomas Darker.” I was in the passage...Welsh was spoken that I did not understand – I saw Richard Lewis first in the passage coming out with deputation. The first time I saw him after he came out was about five to ten minutes – I saw him in the front of the Castle (Inn)with his hat off he waved his hat and shouted.

“ This is another piece of reliable evidence presented to the court by the prosecution. Thomas Darker was stood in the passage and witnessed a mob that Richard Lewis was part of. He was shouting and waving his hat. The last witness called to the stand by the prosecution was Donald Black, a Private of the 93rd Highland Regiment.

“ The mob made a rush on us and I was wounded...I did not see them laying hands on anyone...

Only saw Richard Lewis taking of his hat and cheering but not laying his hands on anyone in the crowd...” Although the evidence comes from the man who was injured this evidence doesn’t really prove anything against the defendant. Donald Black says a mob made a rush on him, this means that anyone of those persons present in the mob could have committed the crime, but from the evidence presented by the other witnesses I think there is enough evidence to convict Richard Lewis for the crime which he has been charged, attempted murder. Abbot and Drew give direct evidence as to the guilt of Penderyn whilst Darker and Black place him at the scene.

I will now look at the evidence presented to the court by the defence. The first witness called by the defence was Thomas Cottrell, a waiter at the Castle Inn.” I was looking out of an upper window of the Castle Inn when I saw a man, clothed in a coat of a sort of drabbed colour, stab one of the soldiers who I know as Donald Black. I am sure that the colour was not blue or black, so that if Richard Lewis was wearing a blue jacket, it could not have been he who stabbed the soldier.” This evidence tells us clearly that Richard Lewis was not the man that attempted to kill Donald Black.

This evidence is reliable and comes from a person who had a clear view of the incident with which the defendant was subsequently charged. This casts serious doubt on the evidence of the prosecution. The second witness called by the defence was Henry Jones; a gentleman residing in Merthyr gave this evidence.” I observed Lewis Lewis advance towards the soldiers - several

others join him, but from the instant confusion that prevailed was so great that he could not identify any – he did not see anyone clad in blue jacket and trousers as Richard Lewis is described to have been, and he considered it was extremely difficult to distinguish individuals from the confusion which existed – he described it as comparable to the rush and tumult of the waves of the sea” This evidence shows us that with the rush there was no chance that Richard Lewis could have been picked out from the crowd and described, the rush made it impossible. The third witness called by the defence was William Edwards.

“ I was standing near James Drew, and we were in the passage of the Castle Inn, several yards from the front door. It was impossible for me to see clearly as the passage was crowded with soldiers. I am sure, therefore, that it must have been impossible for James Drew who was further in than I was to see outside the door, and who in particular inflicted any wound on a soldier. Further more, Drew remained with me from the commencement of the scuffle, before the firing of the guns, until several hours after the same was over, with exception of about an hour or less, at which absence Drew claimed to have gone to see his wife to reassure her of his safety. I was in the company of Mr Drew for several hours afterwards in a neighbouring public house, during which time he did not mention to me the fact that he had seen the defendant stab Donald Black.” This evidence shows us that the evidence presented by James Drew is extremely unreliable and this now begins to cast doubt on the case for defence.

This also casts doubt on the evidence given by both Thomas Darker and James Abbott who in their evidence both said they were stationed in the <https://assignbuster.com/do-you-think-that-dic-penderyn-was-unjustly-hanged-essay/>

passage of the Inn, this shows that their evidence could be unreliable as William Edwards said you could not see outside if you were stood in the passage of the Inn. I am now going to look at Lewis Lewis who was also sentenced to public hanging because of his part in the Merthyr Rising. He was found guilty of causing the Rising but was pardoned by the home secretary even though he ignored pleas for clemency by Dic Penderyn. Dic Penderyn had a very small part in the Merthyr Rising, unlike Lewis Lewis who was one of the main causers of it, so why was he pardoned from the penalty of death by public hanging? Evan Davies said in his book ' Merthyr Iron and Merthyr Riots 1750-1860' that he wrote in 1987:" It seemed that James Abbott, a local barber, had been swearing to get his revenge on Dic Penderyn ever since he had a fight a few months earlier. The Home Secretary wanted to make an example of the two sentenced men..

. Dic was to die as an example to any would-be-rioters." The information about the fight was not told at the hearing but was collected by the Neath Ironmaster, Joseph T Rice, in support of a massive petition for clemency. I think if it had been then James Abbott should not have given evidence against Dic Penderyn. Evan Davies also said " Dic was to die as an example to any would-be-rioters.

" Even if Dic Penderyn was innocent I think they would have found him guilty to show the public that if there were any more riots they would all be sentenced to death. The evidence collected by J. T. Rice indicates that Abbot and Drew conspired together to get Dic Penderyn convicted.

In conclusion I think that there wasn't enough strong, substantial evidence to convict Dic Penderyn of the charge of attempted murder that was brought against him. People of all classes at that time, believed that Dic Penderyn was innocent, even William Crawshay, the ironmaster, who paid for Dic Penderyn's lawyers. People look upon Dic Penderyn's death today as injustice. Later in 1994 The Western Mail printed a confession by Ieuan Parker saying "It was I who wounded the soldier that Dic Penderyn was hanged for" Dic Penderyn will be honoured for his part in the Merthyr Rising and is probably one of Wales's most famous martyrs. I think that there was not enough evidence to convict Dic Penderyn of attempted murder and I think the case should have been acquitted.