

## A Wily Willenhall Poacher

An article by **Mike Newland**

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In 1887 Mr J. L. Vernon's gamekeeper, Joseph Williams apprehended a poacher, one William Pool and his accomplice on the Hilton Park Estate in Staffordshire. Pool and his companion claimed that they were on the land in search of hedgehogs from which to extract an oil that was said to benefit Pool's rheumatism. The Willenhall magistrate however was unimpressed with their explanation, largely because Wily William and his associate had been arrested with a dog in their charge and a ferret in their possession.

Both men were duly charged with trespassing in pursuit of game, found guilty, and each fined five shillings (25p) plus costs. In addition to this they were charged one shilling (5p) damages for breaking a fence. This came to a grand total of one pound, fourteen shillings and six pence (£1.72½). It was also stipulated that if they defaulted on payment of the fine the pair would be sentenced to serve one months hard labour in a penal institute.

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