

BEER AND MISREPRESENTATION 1897



Sketch of Petty Sessions mid C19th
London Illustrated News

Howard Langdon, wheelwright, and Frank Mullins, gamekeeper, both of Ansty, were summoned at the instance of Superintendent Fox for unlawfully obtaining, at Alvediston, on the 3rd January, by falsely representing themselves to be travellers, intoxicating liquors, viz., two pints of beer, during prohibited hours. Mr Jackson appeared for the defence.

PC Jones stated that about three o'clock on the afternoon of the date named he was on duty at Alvediston, when he met the two defendants on the highway. The defendant, Langdon, said to him "I suppose we can have a pint of beer". Witness replied that they could not, as they were not travellers, and were not entitled to it. The man (Langdon) pointed out that there was no one about, and that all was quiet, but the witness again said they were not travellers, and must not have it.

Langdon resided at Ansty, which was under three miles from Alvediston, and Mullins lived at Crockerton Firs, about a mile distant. Langdon afterwards said that he wished to see Mrs Compton, the landlady of the Crown Inn, on a little business, and witness said "Remember you don't go there to get beer". He (Langdon) then walked away. Mullins said he desired to see Mrs Compton in regard to his daughter, who was employed by her, and who was at home ill; and witness also cautioned him not to endeavour to get beer.

On the following Saturday he saw Langdon, and told him that he had been informed that, notwithstanding his caution, he obtained beer from Mrs Compton, and he admitted that he did. Witness asked him why he told Mrs Compton that he (witness) authorised him to demand beer, and he replied "Well, she need not have told you that". He subsequently saw Mullins, and he also admitted that he had beer, but said it was given him by Langdon, and that he did not ask for it. He has measured the distance from Ansty to Alvediston, in company with PS Hunt, and had found the distance to be under three miles.

Mrs Ann Elizabeth Compton, the landlady of the Crown Inn, proved that Langdon came to the inn about three o'clock on the afternoon named, and asked for her son. He added that he wanted a drink of beer, and witness replied "you cannot have it; you are an Ansty man, and you have not come far enough." Langdon rejoined "We have been more than four miles, and we have seen the policeman on the Cross, and he said we were to tell you that you were to let us have some".

In consequence of this statement she drew him one pint, and whilst he was drinking this Mullins came in, and having said something to witness about his daughter, was passed the cup by Langdon. A further pint was drawn but she could not say who ordered it. On a subsequent day the constable questioned her as to whether the men had been to the house, and she then told him what had occurred. In cross-examination the witness admitted that no less than four pints were drawn. One of these was paid for, she said, by Mr Mullins.

Mr Jackson, in defence, contended that there was no evidence that the men represented themselves to be bona-fide travellers, and also raised the point on behalf of Langdon that Ansty was over three miles distant from Alvediston. He admitted that Mullins did not reside three miles away.

Walter G Lever, of Ansty, an ex-Army engineer, was called to say that he had measured the distance between Langdon's house and the Crown Inn and had found it to be three miles, 160 yards. PS Hunt, for the prosecution, said he too had measured the distance and had brought it to $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles and 210 yards only. The Bench, after consideration, decided to leave the question of distance open and to dismiss the case on the grounds that there was no evidence that the men represented themselves to be bona fide travellers. The noble chairman pointed out however, that they would have been surely convicted had they been proceeded against under another section of the Acts.

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