

Police Warden Fined 1939

At Tisbury Petty Sessions on Thursday, John Joseph Noonan of Coombe Farm House, Ansty, Wilts, was summoned for having between the 1st November and the 31st December distributed lottery tickets in the Irish Hospitals Sweepstake.

He was represented by Mr W Farley Rutter, and pleaded guilty.

Inspector Townsend said the proceedings had been taken as a result of a letter being stopped in the post by the GPO. It contained a book of counterfoils relating to a lottery in Ireland. The letter was sent to the Home Office, and it subsequently found its way to his office, and, as a result, proceedings were taken. In view of defendant's plea he would call the police constable, but not three witnesses whom he had in Court.

PC Goulding stated he saw accused, who was employed as a police warden at the RAF depot at Chilmark, and showed him the letter and book of counterfoils. He asked accused if he had sent the letter by post, and he admitted that he had done so. He then told accused that he had reason to believe that he had been distributing Irish Hospitals Sweepstake tickets in the district, and he replied, "I admit I let the persons mentioned in the counterfoils have tickets. I accepted no money, I gave them to them as a Christmas box. I only had one book sent to me by a friend in Ireland." Witness told him he would be reported.

The Chairman, Captain John Hastings: How many tickets had been distributed?
So far as I know one book of 12.

Inspector Townsend pointed out that two of the 12 tickets went to the accused for distributing the other 10.

Mr W Farley Rutter said there was no dispute about the facts and defendant had admitted from the first time he was asked if he had received any tickets that he had had one book of 12 tickets. He was an Irishman and did not understand that he was guilty of an offence if he gave the things away as a Christmas present. He had not sold any of them but kept two for himself and gave the others to friends. He (Mr Rutter) was doubtful if the public, as a whole, understood how drastic the provisions of the Lottery Act of 1934 were but it made it an offence to sell, or distribute, or advertise for sale or distribution, tickets referring to a lottery, except in the case of certain small lotteries, which did not come into the question here.

He (Mr Rutter) was going to ask the Bench to take into account the fact that the Act was not generally known. This was the first case of the kind that he (Mr Rutter) had had occasion to deal with in that district, and he did not know of any other case that had come before that Court. He asked the Bench to accept his client's explanation and that he was quite innocent of having committed an offence. Accused was a police warden employed by the Air Ministry at Chilmark; he had a completely clean record, was aged 38, and had served in the Army for 21½ years with an exemplary character.

The Chairman observed that the provisions of the Lottery Act were well known because there had been numerous prosecutions. They could not accept the suggestion that accused did not know that he was committing an offence, and he would be fined 20s.

Western Gazette Friday 17 March 1939