

Theft of Cartridges 1935

Four Defendants Convicted



Tisbury Petty Sessions, Thursday, before Captain John Hastings, Col F R Kennedy Shaw, Mr Bernard Parham and Mr M S Waters.

A suggestion that it was quite customary for gamekeepers and beaters to take cartridges from supplies left lying about at shooting parties was made during the hearing of theft charges against four men who were present at a shoot on the Pyt House Estate on November 19th.

George H Bennett of Toakes Lane, Semley, was summoned for stealing 32 cartridges, value 5s, the property of Major F Drummond; Josiah H Sims, School House, Newtown, Tisbury, 24 cartridges, value 3s 8d; Frank J J Coltart, Barkers Hill, Semley, 12 cartridges, value 1s 10d; and Samuel Chapman, Pyt House Lodge, West Tisbury, 10 cartridges, value 1s 6d.

Bennett and Chapman pleaded guilty, and Sims and Coltart not guilty.

Horace Sidney Langham, a licensee's assistant, of Tisbury, who was in charge of the cartridges, said after the shoot he found that a full magazine had been tampered with. As he was returning home Bennett asked him if he could do with some cartridges, and he produced some which were similar to those stolen.

PC Symonds said he interviewed the defendants and recovered the stolen cartridges. In cross examination, he agreed that Coltart was given permission on the day of the shoot to take a packet of cartridges.

Bennett, a salesman, told the magistrates that he went to the shoot as a spectator. He said he did not realise that he was stealing when he took some cartridges from a magazine which was left in the doorway of a hut.

Sims, a gamekeeper employed by Lieut Colonel J M Bennett-Stanford, stated that he saw a magazine and took a few cartridges because he thought that they were the property of his employer.

Coltart, who went into the witness-box, said he was given permission by the loader to have a few cartridges. Later he saw an open magazine which he thought belonged to Col Bennett-Stanford. He took a few of the cartridges, and it was not until he reached home that he began to doubt whether they were the property of Col Bennett-Stanford. Since the shoot he had lost his employment as gamekeeper on the estate.

Mr A B Lemon, for Chapman, said shoots were conducted in a very loose way. Cartridges were left about and the men took a few which would later have been used for the employers benefit. That sort of thing went on at every shoot in the country. It was a practice that had to be stopped, but he did not think that there was any question of feloniously stealing. Chapman had lost his employment after six years faithful service, and he was to be turned out of his house. That punishment alone was more than sufficient to fit the crime.

At the request of the Bench, Benjamin Marshall, head gamekeeper to Colonel Bennett-Stanford, was called. He stated that Coltart would have no right to take cartridges from Col Bennett-Stanford's case. Two of the cartridges produced were similar to those used by Colonel Bennett-Stanford.

The Bench convicted in each case.

Defendants were bound over for twelve months. In addition, Bennett was fined 30s and Sims 20s, and each defendant was ordered to pay 16s costs.

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