

Licensee Sent to Prison

Two Months for Receiving

Lorry Driver Convicted of Theft

C.T. April 26, 1941

TWO charges of receiving stolen goods were brought at Christchurch Police Court on Monday, against Frederick Charles Pitman, licensee of the Crown Hotel, Bransgore.

Accused, who pleaded not guilty, was defended by Mr. A. E. Dalton.

The charges related to 3 cwt. of laying meal and 126 lbs. of corn, value £3 7s. 5d. and one cwt. of mixed corn, value 16/6, the property of Messrs. Tinsley and Son, Ltd.

Olaf Turner, of 9, Eversholt Road, Bournemouth, employed by Messrs. Tinsley and Son, stated that on 12th April he loaded a lorry with goods including the laying-meal and corn. The corn consisted of one consignment of 114 lbs. and an additional 12 lbs. which was added to the other sacks, making 126 lbs. in all. He identified the sacks produced in court.

Cross-examined by Mr. Dalton, witness said he identified the sacks because the extra 12 lbs. had been put in the other sacks, an unusual procedure. He also identified the label on one of the sacks, they had all been labelled but the other two labels were missing.

Saw Goods At Back Of Inn.

Mr. Edward Burt Marriage, managing director of Messrs. Tinsley and Son, said he went to the Crown Inn, Bransgore, with P.C. Winspear and saw the bags in the store at the back of the hotel. He said he could definitely identify the goods. He said a white maize was used that was not used by any other firm in the neighbourhood and the mash in the sacks was the same as made by his firm. The white maize used was unusual. He produced a sample of the maize which was compared with that in the sacks.

In answer to Mr. Dalton, Witness said his firm might supply shops with the mash in small quantities, but not in large quantities. He said that when at the Crown Hotel he did not claim any other property, he did say, however, that other goods might have belonged to his firm.

John Mercer, employed by Messrs. Tinsley and Son, as a lorry driver, said he called at the Crown Hotel just before 2 p.m. on 12th April. He said to Pitman: "Do you want anything? I've got some on the lorry." Pitman replied: "Yes, the usual place." Witness told him he would call back later. He said Pitman agreed to pay him £2 10s. 0d.; he did not tell him who the meal and corn belonged to, nor did he say it was his. He returned to the Crown Hotel about 4 p.m. and put the goods in Pitman's store.

Previously, about 1st April, he had sold accused a cwt. of corn for which he paid 10/-.

Cross-examined by Mr. Dalton, Mercer said he first went into the Crown Hotel at ten minutes to two. He asked Pitman: "Can you do with some meal," and when Pitman said yes, he told him the price would be £2 10s. 0d. When he returned and put the bags in the store, accused had left the money for him in notes, as far as he could recollect they were given to him by a man in the yard.

When Mr. Dalton put it to him that there was not a word of truth in the statement that he was paid any money, he reasserted that he was paid.

Ruben W. Jose, of Neacroft, said accused was registered with him for meal and corn, but he had not supplied him with any corn or meal like that produced. On Good Friday he supplied him with a bag of pig meal.

"Not Quite On The Straight."

P.C. Winspear said he saw accused and told him he had reason to believe he had bought some meal and corn knowing it to be stolen. Accused replied: "Well, I don't know about it being stolen. I didn't see the bloke. I suppose it was not quite on the straight." He said there were only two sacks and his wife was there when they were delivered. Accused showed witness some receipts but could produce none for the meal and corn.

When charged, accused said: "Well, as a matter of fact I did see the bloke in the bar on Saturday. He asked me about having some stuff on the cheap, but I did not pay him for it. With regard to the second charge, of receiving a cwt. of corn, accused told the constable he got it from the International Stores. "All I had from the lorry driver," he said, "was the two sacks on Saturday."

Mr. Dalton questioned witness on accused having said: "He did not see the bloke." Evidence had been given that accused was not present when the goods were put in the store, was he not referring to that time?

P.C. Winspear replied that he did not understand it in that way, accused first said: "I did not see the bloke," and later said: "Well as a matter of fact, I did see the bloke."

"Not Half."

Accused, in evidence, said when Mercer came to the bar and said: "Could you do with a couple of sacks of meal?" he replied, "Not half," treating it as a joke. Nothing more was said at the time, he did not know Mercer but had seen him previously in the bar. After closing the bar at 2 p.m. he went to register at the Labour Exchange, returning between 4 and 5. On Sunday morning he saw the sacks in his shed; there were two bags with labels that were not his property. He guessed where they had come from, but he had not paid any money for them and had not arranged to pay for them. He did not do anything to try and find out who the sacks belonged to and had not touched them. He thought the man would come back and take them away.

He did not remember telling the constable that he supposed it was not on the straight. He made no attempt to hide from the constable that the sacks were there. At no time had Mercer told him he had stolen property he wanted to sell.

Accused denied that he had received any corn from Mercer, the corn was his own property.

Cross-examined by Inspector W. P. Thomas, accused said he treated the matter as a joke and denied that he had paid for the goods. He said his wife was not present when the sacks were left.

Mr. Dalton, saying that it was a serious charge as accused was the licensee of a licensed house, contended that the case rested, upon the unsupported evidence of the man charged with the theft. Accused had given an absolute denial of making any payment; the reply of "Not half" was not making a contract and the conversation when that was said was of no significance.

Charges Against Lorry Driver.

In the evidence against John Mercer (35), of "Glen View," Glenville Road, Walkford, who pleaded guilty to stealing the goods, P.C. Winspear said he was passing the Crown Hotel and saw the lorry standing outside. He later saw accused and questioned him about the meal and corn which he should have delivered at another address, but had not done so.

Accused told him he called at the Crown Hotel and asked the landlord if he could do with anything on the cheap and he said could and paid him £2 10s. 0d. in notes.

A Temptation.

When charged, accused said: "It is a temptation when people will buy stolen goods."

Accused admitted selling a bag of mixed corn to Pitman on a previous occasion, for which he was paid 10/-.

Accused also pleaded guilty to a third charge, of embezzling £1 3s. 9d. for which he had receipted the delivery note, but had not handed the money to his employers. When questioned by P.C. Winspear he frankly admitted it.

Mercer told the magistrates he was sorry it had all happened; he had had a lot of trouble and worry, his wife had been ill and he asked for leniency. He said he had been offered a good position to give him a chance to make good and he would repay the loss to his employers.

After hearing the evidence against Pitman, the magistrates retired to consider their verdicts, and on returning said they found the charges against both the accused proved.

It was stated that Pitman was a native of Blandford, formerly a gamekeeper, and became licensee of the Crown Hotel twelve months ago. Inspector Thomas said Pitman was a man in a trusted position as the licensee of an hotel. His offence of receiving was worse than that of stealing.

Mercer was a native of Lancashire. He was employed by Messrs. Tinsley and Son in January this year as a lorry driver. At Southampton in 1939 he had been bound over for one year and ordered to make restitution of £10 for stealing a cash box containing money.

The Inspector said in the present case Mercer had made a clean breast of it and there was a job awaiting him. He wished another charge of embezzling 5/- to be taken into consideration.

The Chairman, Major W. O. Campbell, told Pitman his case was the worst of the two and added: "If there were no receivers there would be fewer thieves."

Pitman was sentenced to one month on each charge to run consecutively (two months in all), and Mercer was sentenced to one month on each charge to run concurrently.

The other magistrates were the Mayor (Councillor T. Markham), the Earl of Malmesbury and Mr. E. J. Slinn.