

# Purewell Licensee Fined: Excess Water in Spirits Alleged

## *Petition from Regular Customers Handed To Magistrates*

Christchurch Times 1959

A petition signed by 31 regular customers of the Star Inn, Purewell, was handed to the magistrates at Christchurch Court, on Monday. It read: "We understand the licensee is in some difficulties, but we are sure that the present circumstances are isolated and we shall continue to give him our wholehearted support".

The licensee, Mr. Frank Rumney, had pleaded "Guilty" to two summonses of selling whisky and gin containing water in excess of that which should be present.

Handed to the magistrates by Mr. Cyril Clark, who appeared for Rumney, the petition stated: "We the undersigned have been regular customers of Frank Rumney of the Star Inn, Purewell, for some past years. We have always found his house well conducted, himself a most genial host, the premises extremely clean and his supplies of intoxicants of the best quality".

### FINES AND COSTS

The magistrates fined him £5 in each case and ordered him to pay £11 10s. costs and £4 4s. advocate's fee. Chairman Col. K. R. Brooke said they had taken into consideration Mr. Clark's plea of mitigation and also the fact that costs in the case were comparatively heavy. Mr. F. A. Stone, solicitor for the Hampshire County Council, said the summonses were brought under the Food and Drugs Act, 1955.

At about 10 minutes to nine on New Year's Eve Mr. J. H. Gray, deputy chief inspector of the county weights and measures department, entered the lounge bar of the Star Inn accompanied by other officers. Serving in the bar was Mrs. Rumney, defendant's wife.

Mr. Gray made an informal test of gin and it seemed something was wrong. They returned to the lounge bar later and Mr. Gray asked for two doubles of gin. He told Mrs. Rumney he was an inspector and was going to have the gin analysed.

Mrs. Rumney called her husband who was told what had happened and that the gin was going for analysis. He said: "Carry on".

### MARKED 70% PROOF

Two doubles of whisky were also purchased and Mr. Rumney was told these were also going for analysis. The two bottles from which samples were taken were marked 70% proof. In the case of the gin it was found to be only 59.2% proof and the whisky 61 % proof.

Mr. Gray saw defendant privately and said it seemed that additional water was in the gin and whisky. Mr. Rumney was alleged to have said he had mixed the brands of spirit because it was in short supply and added: "I will admit it. I have put a double of water in a bottle. It is the first time I have done it. Things are not what they should be and trade is bad and I have a wife and two grown-up children to support". He was told the matter would be reported.

Some time later Mr. Gray called again for a spot check and asked for a double of gin. It was found to be in order. A similar spot check was made later when the whisky was also found to be in order.

## WRONG BOTTLES

On the first of these spot checks Mr. Rumney was alleged to have said that it seemed the previous samples contained excess water and went on to say the wrong bottles were up that night. He had thought about it since and should have said he was treated to a lot of drinks and had put the wrong bottle up.

Asked if he meant a special bottle for himself he said that was so. The officers of the local authority were the first and only people to taste the spirits from the bottle that night.

Mr. Stone said the public were entirely at the mercy of retailers of that nature. He would be a very brave customer to ask whether the whisky had water in excess and he would have no means of knowing anyhow. It was for that reason the Food and Drugs authority viewed those cases with some concern.

Mr. Clark said Mr. Rumney was in a rather sorry position at the age of 45. Until Christmas 1958 he had led a perfectly steadfast life and had a completely unblemished character.

## EXCELLENT CHARACTER

He had served 12 years in the Royal Navy and was demobilised in 1945 with the rank of Petty Officer and an excellent character. During the war he was in convoys in the North Sea and Atlantic and was engaged in support of the landings in Normandy, France and Naples.

On demobilisation he returned to his trade as a carpenter but had in mind that he would eventually like to become a licensee of a public house. He got a job as a club steward for three years, in the meantime having his name down with a firm of brewers. Ultimately in May 1955 he was offered his present house and so achieved an ambition he had had for some years.

## SMALL HOUSE

The Star Inn was a small house at Purewell with a tiny lounge and a public bar not very much bigger. The magistrates would realise it was public bar trade and little else and he had a nucleus of regular customers in the public bar.

From May 1955 he had carried on his career as a publican perfectly honestly. Then it came to Christmas 1958 when he said to himself that things had not been so good that year and there might be an opportunity of making a little more money than he was justly entitled to.

"Let this be said in his favour," continued Mr. Clark. It was into the lounge bar that Mr. Gray went for the samples—in the bar where trade was negligible and few people went. So far as spirits in the public bar were concerned they were absolutely right all the time. It was only in the lounge bar that he put those two bottles on Boxing night and when Mr. Gray called they were only three parts empty.

The brewers, said Mr. Clark, were not going to take any action against him. They were completely satisfied with the conduct of the premises throughout the four years Mr. Rumney had been there.

Insp. H. N. Quiggin said the police had no cause for complaint and were satisfied in every way with the manner Mr. Rumney conducted his house.