



Silver Geneva Pocket Watch

Soldier Charged With Theft Of Watch – Case Dismissed

At Salisbury County Petty Sessions, on Tuesday, before Lord Radnor and other magistrates, Arthur Morely, a private in the 16th Lancers, stationed at West Down Camp, was charged with stealing a silver watch, valued at 25s., the property of Herbert Harris, labourer, at Winterbourne Stoke, on August 17th.

Prosecutor stated that he was in the employment of Mr. W. H. Dean, at Hill Farm, Winterbourne Stoke, and on the day named was threshing wheat. He placed his jacket against the rick. The watch was in the jacket pocket. It was a silver Geneva, and placed it there at one o'clock. At 3.30 he went to see the time, and the watch was missing, the chain also having been taken. He saw a soldier on the road, which was fifty yards from the rick, about quarter past two. He was dressed in khaki uniform, and was leaning on his bicycle. He could not identify the defendant as the soldier in question.

William Henry Dean, farmer, of Winterbourne Stoke, said the last witness was one of his employees. About 2.30 on the date named walked to the rick where Harris was employed. When he got there he saw a soldier walking away from the rick towards the road. Afterwards the soldier rode off on his bicycle towards Winterbourne Stoke. He did not see the man's face. He could not identify defendant as the man he saw.

Ernest Phillimore, a lad aged twelve, living at Winterbourne Stoke, said he was in the Amesbury road on Monday, the 17th last, about quarter past two. He saw some men threshing at Mr. Dean's rick, and also noticed a soldier standing in the road near by. He passed within five yards of the soldier, and noticed the number and letters "ISL" on his uniform. The soldier told him to get through the hedge. He should not know the man again, and could not identify the defendant.

Jessie Green, who has been staying at Winterbourne Stoke, but who lives in London, said she was in the village about three o'clock on the day named. She had met the defendant twice previously, and saw him at the time she stated. She asked him the time, in the course of conversation, and he took out a watch and told her the time – ten minutes past three. She thought it was a silver watch. It had not a chain attached to it.

Mr. W. H. Jackson (acting magistrate's Clerk): What were the two dates which you had seen him previously?

Witness: the 14th and 16th.

Mr. Jackson: Did he ask you any questions?

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Witness: In what way do you mean?

Mr. Jackson: Had you a watch?

Witness: Yes, I had.

Mr. Jackson: Did he ask you any questions about it?

Witness: I don't know that he did. I know he had not a watch.

Mr. Jackson: How do you know that?

Witness: I never saw one. I told him the time on his request.

P.S. Lodge, stationed at Shrewton, said he went to West Down North Camp on Tuesday, the 18th instant, where he saw the accused. He said, "I am going to put some questions to you, and I caution you to be very careful how you answer them. Were you at Winterbourne Stoke on Monday, the 17th instant. The Defendant replied "yes." Witness asked, "Had you a bicycle at that time?" He replied, "Yes, I had." "Were you talking to a young woman that day asked the Sergeant. "Yes, I was," replied the soldier. "Did you ask that young woman what the time was?" the Sergeant asked, and defendant replied, "No; she asked me the time." Asked whether he had a watch in his possession, defendant replied, "No, I have never had a watch in my possession since I have been on the camp." Witness charged him on suspicion with stealing the watch, and he made reply to the charge. The sergeant searched defendant and his tent, but could not find the watch, and it had not been recovered.

Lord Radnor, on being told this was all the evidence, remarked: We don't wish to hear any more. We have had the most trivial evidence before us on which to accuse a man of stealing a watch. There is no possible evidence to lead one anywhere within mile of conviction. I don't think the case ought ever to have been brought. We don't ask you to plead. We dismiss the case. Addressing the officer of the regiment who had attended the Court, his lordship said, "I am extremely sorry to have brought you here."

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