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BREAD FOR GERMAN PRISONERS.

LITTLEHAMPTON PROSECUTION.

Harry Terry, 16 years, 9 months, of Angmering, was summoned at the Littlehampton County Petty Sessions for communicating three loaves to a German prisoner likely to facilitate his escape.

Mr. A. B. Dixon, of Worthing, appeared for the prosecution and said that proceedings were taken under Section 46a of D.O.R.A. which provided that nothing should be given to a German prisoner that would facilitate his escape. The boy apparently gave or sold three loaves to a German prisoner. There was more than met the eye in the matter. He was informed by the military authorities that nothing was more dangerous in communication with German prisoners than to let them have bread, the best medium of all for concealing messages, etc. The Military viewed with considerable alarm German prisoners getting in touch with civilians for intelligence reasons. It was considered that there was a very great danger of information valuable to the enemy passing from camp to camp, and through repatriated prisoners to Germany. In the event of the Bench convicting the boy there would be extraordinary difficulty in giving punishment. If the boy had been a man he should have asked for imprisonment, without the option of a fine, but here was a boy, whose life he realised would be wrecked if he were sent to prison. If he were very heavily fined his mother would have to pay, and he realised the difficulty of adequate sentence.

Private Charles Fuller, Royal Defence Corps, in charge of German prisoners, said at 9.10 a.m. on September 5th he was in charge of five prisoners working at a farm at Ferring. He saw the lad put three loaves into a sack held by a German prisoner. He immediately went towards them and asked what authority he had for giving a prisoner these three loaves. He replied that he was not aware he was doing any harm. Witness told him it was causing him a lot of trouble. He made him take the bread back. The prisoner would have paid for the bread the defendant said.

To Mr J. A. Morris Bew (for defendant): Witness was about 25 yards from the German prisoner. He did not see the prisoner raise his hands in front of the boy. He must admit the boy was rather surprised. He could not say whether he was upset. The prisoner threw the sack into the ditch when he saw witness coming.

saw witness coming.

Inspector Thomas said on September 5th, he interviewed defendant at Angmering. Defendant said "I was delivering bread at some cottages on Mr. Lovey's farm at Ferring and as he was going towards the cottages I saw a German behind the hedge as though he were hiding from the guard. I had to pass close by him to go to some cottages and as I passed he said "some loaves." I took three loaves out of the basket and was putting them in a sack which the prisoner was holding up when the guard came along. The German threw the sack down and ran away. The guard asked my name and address which I gave, I then went about my work." He said in reply to a question that he had been warned by his master not to supply them with bread. The boy bore a good character, but was a little dull.

Harold Terry, the Square, Angmering, bread deliverer, said he was delivering at the cottages. He was leading the horse and a German prisoner came out from the ditch which was very deep. He threw his hands about and asked for some loaves. He got some out of the basket and was putting them in the sack when the guard called out. The prisoner tore off and threw the sack into the ditch. He got the loaves back. He let him have them because he was frightened.

To Mr. Dixon. He had seen German prisoners before, but had no dealings with them. He had heard of other boys having dealings with other prisoners. He expected to be paid for the bread by the prisoner, otherwise he would not have let him have it. He was trying to do the same as the other boys. In answer to the Chairman witness said the prisoner did not threaten him at all.

Arthur Meech, defendant's employer, said defendant was a very good boy, but rather thick. He believed he spent all his money on the house. His two brothers had died in France.

To Mr. Dixon. He had cautioned defendant.

Mr. Bew said there was the question whether three loaves of bread would facilitate the escape of prisoners. With regard to the boy he was a thick headed youngster suddenly confronted by a German prisoner, he had been cautioned, but like many other people, when their skins were in danger, took the easier course and gave up the loaves. Of course it was wrong, he should rather have been throttled than give them up. Most of those present were fathers and fond of their children, and he asked them that with their duty in executing justice to think of mercy.

The Chairman said that the defendant was young, and a little bit slow, and they would deal with him leniently and fine him only £2. They had reason to believe that there was a leakage and that had got to be stopped, and the next person who came to the Court would be sent to prison. They gave everybody fair warning that they would be sent to prison in future. They might pity a prisoner, but nobody need pity any German prisoner, they were not having a bad time. Bread was a means of communication, and as Chairman of the Visiting Justices at Portsmouth Gaol he knew what use was made of bread.