



Dundee High Court

Young Soldier Faces Murder Charge

Barry Camp Incident

Before Lord Moncrieff at a sitting of the High Court of Justiciary at Dundee yesterday the hearing was begun in the charge of murder preferred against Ronald Frederick Wood, a private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

The charge against Wood, who belongs to Portsmouth, and is not yet 18 years of age, is that on July 27 last, in a hut at the Royal Army Ordnance Corps Depot, Barry Camp, Barry, he discharged a rifle loaded with ball cartridge at Gerald Britton Woodhouse, lance-corporal, Royal Army Ordnance Corps, and wounded him, whereby Woodhouse was so severely injured that he died on August 2 in the Royal Infirmary, Dundee: and he did murder the said General Britton Woodhouse; and did previously evince malice and ill-will towards the said Gerald Britton Woodhouse.

The case for the Crown was conducted by Mr. T. M. Taylor, Advocate-Depute, assisted by Mr. J. F. G. Thomson, Advocate; and Mr. R. Macgregor Mirchell, K.C. assisted by Mr. W. Garrett, advocate appeared for the defence.

After evidence had been led regarding the locus, Sub-Conductor Frederick Christian Fothergill Horey (35) who was Staff Quartermaster-Sergeant of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in Barry Camp, said that the deceased Lance-Corporal Woodhouse and accused arrived in camp on May 6. A few days after Woodhouse spoke to witness about deceased. He came across to him and said he wished him to speak to accused for him, as accused seemed to think he was getting on to him. Witness told accused he was not to get that idea into his mind. Orders had to be obeyed.

Subsequently he put accused under Sergeant Phelp in the store. So far as he knew, five rifles were kept there, but two of the owners had taken theirs over and kept them in the hut.

Rifles and Two Cartridges

As the result of information he received early on the morning of 27th July, he went to the men's quarters, but found that Woodhouse had been removed. Consequent upon what he was told, he got out a picket primarily to look for accused, and to arrest him if he could be found. Later he received a rifle from Sergeant Phelps, and also two live cartridges. Witness said that when he examined the bed which Woodhouse had occupied he found a hole in the left rail of it, and also saw marks in the partition at the side of the bed and in the floor of the passage that might have been made by a bullet or by splinters of the rail on the bed.

Cross-examined, witness said he did not know accused was then 17 and 18 years of age.

Except for the instance when Woodhouse reported accused, were you aware of any ill - feeling between them?

On one occasion Wood said he thought that the corporal was on to him.

His Lordship -- have you ever heard of live cartridges being picked up on the range and brought into the store? – Not at Barry, but at other places.

Come Outside a Minute

Pte. Charles Henry Nash (20) said that on the evening of 26th July, in a Carnoustie fish and chip shop, he and the deceased met Pte. Tucker and accused. He heard Woodhouse ask accused to come outside a minute. Later, in the street, he came upon the two, and they appeared to be shaking hands. Accused had a handkerchief at his face and he turned round to the corporal and and said he would get the corporal before the night was out. On the way back to the camp Woodhouse complained about a kick, but did not say who kicked him. They arrived back about half past eleven and went to bed. Witness fell asleep but was awakened by a bang. He heard moaning coming from Woodhouse's end of the hut and on getting up saw that the corporal appeared to be in great pain. There was a rifle leaning against the bed, about a foot away from the end of it.

Cross-examined, witness said that Woodhouse and he did not go into the fish shop because they knew accused and Tucker were inside. They went in to get a fish supper.

Would Give Himself Up

Ernest Norman Walter Tucker (20), Private, Royal Army Ordinance Corps, said that he and accused had had a drink in the canteen of the other bar at Barry. When accused returned to the fish shop after Woodhouse had called him out, his face was bleeding. Witness said to him, "Have you been fighting again?" Accused replied, "It's that ____ Woodhouse again". On the way back to camp accused said if he did, anything he would give himself up at Carnoustie. He said he knew where he could find some ammunition, and also that they could not do anything to him if he was not old enough. He said nothing about a rifle, he handed witness some letters and money, replying – "Mind these for me. You never know what is going to happen. If you dare stop me I will do something to you too".

When they reached the camp accused said he would be down to the hut in a minute. Woodhouse was in bed when the witness went in, but he came and asked where accused was. Witness replied that accused would be back in a minute. He then went to bed, but was awakened by the sound of a shot.

Answering Mr. McGregor Mitchell, K.C. witness said that when accused came back to the fish shop he was very excited and very agitated.

William Thomas Searth (21) also a private in the R.A.O.C., in the course of his statement said that he went to Woodhouse after the shot. The deceased said – "Woodie has got me in the stomach!"

Similar evidence was given by Ralph Mitchell, another private. He told the Court that every time Wood got an order from Woodhouse he seemed to object to being spoken to.

After the shot witness went over to Woodhouse, the deceased told him that he had wakened up and made a grab at the rifle, but "Woodie" had got him.

Another R.A.O.C. Private, Thomas Honford Rogers, said he was in the bed in the hut and there was no light. Just after he got into bed he heard footsteps coming from the passage.

Shook Hands With Him

Private Frederick Croucher deposed that he was also awakened by the sound of a shot during the night, but he heard nothing.

James Hill, another private, recognized the rifle produced in Court as his. It was kept in the storehouse. As far as witness was aware the relations between the two were "all right."

Sydney Charles Crossman, also a private, said that he was instructed to go to the police station to inform the police, and on the way he met the accused Wood. They entered the station together, and while the police sergeant was dressing, Wood gave witness two rounds of ammunition, but he did not say anything.

Private Francis Leonard McGrath told the Court of a conversation he had with Woodhouse on the night in question. Woodhouse said that he had fought with Wood outside a fish and chip shop. The deceased man told witness that Wood fought unfairly by kicking him on the body.

Quoting Woodhouse's words to him, witness said — "Wood was in a — of a temper. The fight finished when I knocked him down. I picked him up and shook hands with him, and Wood came back and said he would get me before the night was over."

Witness had been sleeping for sometime when he was awakened by the sound of footsteps. Then he saw Wood standing over Woodhouse's bed with a rifle. Woodhouse sat up in bed, grabbed the rifle by the muzzle, and tried to push it away from him. There was a struggle for a moment, and then witness saw a flash and heard a bang. "I shut my eyes and heard a sound — the rifle must have dropped. Someone went out of the hut".

Began To Groan

Who was it that went out of the hut? – The man who was standing over the bed.

Woodhouse began to groan, and he sat up in bed with his legs over the side. He said that Wood had "got him."

In answer to a question by his Lordship, witness said the moonlight enabled him to see that it was Wood standing over Woodhouse's bed.

Sergeant Victor Ebbage said that no one in the unit was entitled to be in possession of ammunition. On the day of the shooting, to his knowledge, there was no ammunition in the depot.

Sergeant-Major John Francis Williams, R.A.M.C., said Woodhouse was suffering from gunshot wounds in the lower part of the abdomen.

The trial was continued until to-day

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