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THE EPSOM RIOT

A PARADE AT BOW STREET

CANADIANS SENT FOR TRIAL.

Charged with riot and manslaughter, eight Canadian soldiers appeared at Bow-street Police Court on Friday:-

James Connors, 19, private, 13th Canadian
Highlanders.

Robert Alexander McAllan, 45, C.A.M.C.

Allen McMaster, 30, private, 3rd Canadians.

Alphonse Masse, 27, C.A.M.C.

Gervase Porier, 24 C.A.M.C.

Herbert Tait, 29, gunner, 11th Division Canadians.

Frank Harold Wilkie, 21, private, 102nd Battalion
Canadians.

David Verex, 32, Private, Canadian Forestry Corps.

Sir Richard Muir, who prosecuted, told Sir John Dickinson, the magistrate, the story of the Epsom riot and the death of Sergt. Green.

He said Connors was not in camp at roll call on the night in question, but at 1.30 the next morning the sergeant in charge of his hut heard him shouting that he had been mixed up in a row and that he had "chucked a policeman over the hedge." The next morning it was noticed that he had, blood on the back of his tunic.

McAllan was a camp policeman. He reported for duty at 11.30 p.m. on June 17th, and had no business to leave the camp afterwards but at 12.30 he was seen with his head injured. When arrested he said he was in the crowd at Epsom and was struck on the back of the head by someone.

McMaster was in his hut at "Lights Out," but on the following morning he was reported absent and was afterwards found to have been injured. On his arrest he professed to be unable to account for his injuries, but said all he wanted was fair play and that they were not the ringleaders.

Masse, who was also wounded in the head, would be shown to have been in bed at roll call, but his statement was as follows:-

"I know nothing about it. I was coming from the train. There was a crowd. I was there about two minutes. I said to myself, 'It is dangerous here. I had better go.' Just then I received a blow on the head and fell."

With regard to Porier there was some difficulty about proving his presence in camp overnight, but the next day he was found to be injured and he said he was hit in the dark at Epsom. He complained that it was only those who were hit who had been arrested and that it was not fair because there were others.

"It must be admitted," said counsel, "that it is only those who have been hit who have been taken, but that is a

grievance which the prosecution are not in a position to remove. The prosecution can only act upon evidence, and the evidence of obviously recent injuries to the head immediately after the riot is, in our submission, evidence that these men took part in the riot. There they are like so many marked sixpences, with the evidence clearly impressed upon them."

Going on to deal with the remaining prisoners Sir Richard said Tait had injuries to his head and his story was that he was returning to camp after a visit to London when he was struck close to the park. Wilkie had a nasty cut over the eye and his statement was as follows:-

"I was in front of the police station at Epsom when I was hit - I believe with a sharp stone. As soon as I was hit I went back to camp. That is all I done."

Verex admitted that he received his injuries on the Tuesday night when he was in the crowd at Epsom.

Evidence was given by Major Sandys Bird, Major James Ross, Inspector Pawley, Regtl. Sergt. Major Parsons and Sergt. Dower, of the Canadian Engineers, who said that when he heard Connors say he had thrown a policeman over the hedge he looked at the man and did not think he was capable of doing it. (Laughter.)

On Saturday, when the hearing was resumed, Mr. Abinger, who defended, said that all the defendants pleaded "Not Guilty." but they would reserve their defence, expect in the cases of Porier and Tait.

Porier, in evidence, said he heard a bugle blown and followed a crowd of soldiers going "down town," thinking that there was a fire. He took no part in the attack on the police station. The injury to his head was caused by a brick thrown by a soldier in Rosebery Park.

Tait said that he had been to Olympia and returned by a late train. On his way to camp he came across a big crowd of soldiers. When in the thickest part of the crowd he was struck down and became dazed. He knew nothing about the attack.

Porier and Tait were discharged, and the other defendants were committed for trial on charges of manslaughter, malicious damage and riot.

THE INQUEST.

BUGLER SENT FOR AND ARRESTED.

JURY'S SEARCHING QUESTIONS.

There was a dramatic conclusion to the resumed inquest on Monday on Station-sergt. Tomas Green, who succumbed to severe injuries received during the attack on Epsom Police Station on June 17th. At the request of the jury, the bugler, Robert Todd, whose name has been mentioned in connection with the bugle calls at the camp

and along the road, was sent for, and, although he said he could give no evidence, the jury, after nearly an hour's deliberation returned a verdict of "Manslaughter" against him and the six Canadian soldiers - Ptes. McMaster, Wilkie, Masse, McAllan, Connors and Verex - who were committed for trial from Bow-street on Saturday. He was accordingly arrested by the civil police and committed for trial on the Coroner's inquisition.

The inquest at the previous sitting was adjourned for a fortnight, and the Coroner

(Mr. Gilbert White) explained to the jury the reason they were summoned again before that time was that it was necessary to conclude the inquiry before the accused stood their trial at the Assizes.

Mr. G. D. Young represented the Epsom Urban Council, and those who watched the proceedings included Messrs. W. Dorset, H. Willcock-Pollen and E. B. Jay.

Major P. Bird, adjutant at the camp; recalled, said he was at Bow-street Police Court proceedings on the previous Friday when he saw the prisoners, all of whom belonged to the camp, two of them being staff men. Their medical documents showed that none of the men had, any injuries whilst at the camp prior to June 17th.

By the Jury-The bugler was not among the prisoners, and was detained in camp pending inquiries.

Mr. Ede - Could he be got here this afternoon

Major Bird - Yes. I will send for, him.

Mr. Ede - Are these six men the only men who the authorities know were in this riot? - Yes.

How many do the authorities compute were outside the station that evening? - Roughly speaking 'between 300 and 400 left the camp, and some of those returned to camp without having gone as far as the police station.

There were considerably more than six? - Yes.

P.-c. Rose, a new witness, said that at 11.5 p.m. on June 17th he was summoned from his house to parade for duty at once at the police station. On the way to the station he heard a lot of shouting and cheering and the sounding of a bugle coming from the direction of Woodcote Camp. On his arrival at the station at 11.20 p.m. there was a large crowd of soldiers approaching from the direction of the camp. When they arrived outside the station witness noticed the majority were armed with sticks, railings and posts, and they were demanding the release of two prisoners detained in the station. Inspector Pawley endeavoured to quiet them, but they would not listen to him and commenced to throw stones and pieces of timber. He did not see any Canadian officer among them. The police managed to keep them outside the station for about 20 minutes when the side doors gave way under the pressure of the crowd outside. A determined attack was then made on the station, and the police were ordered inside by Inspector Pawley.

THE FATAL BLOW.

At midnight the police charged, and Station-sergt. Green was standing on witness's right side when a rush was made in which Sergt. Green was struck across the forehead by a soldier with a large piece of wood resembling a post. He fell to the ground. Witness was surrounded and had to fight his way back to the corner of the station. He reported this to Inspector Pawley. On June 19th he attended a parade at Woodcote Park Camp and identified prisoner Connors as being in front of the crowd

near the spot where Sergt. Green was struck down. Connors was armed with a long railing.

By the Jury - The crowd was entirely composed of soldiers in khaki and blue. Witness did not see and civilian there.

Mr. Ede - Can you identify the man who struck the blow which knocked Sergt. Green down?

Witness - I did identify the man who to the best of my belief was the man, but owing to the weight of evidence there was no charge against him.

James Parsons, regimental sergeant-major of the C.A.M.C. at Woodcote, who was aroused by several bugle calls at the camp on the night of June 17th, said he left his quarters and steps were taken to stop the men leaving the camp, but they were of no avail. He went to the police station with Major Ross, who endeavoured to reason with the men, who were armed with sticks, stones, and other missiles, which they began to throw. When witness appealed the crowd the men immediately in front of him stopped, but when he got to the police station door stones were thrown again. When the prisoners were released the crowd was quite willing to return to camp. He saw the bugler at different times on the road down, but he did, not see him outside the station. He could not say whether he sounded the bugle on the way to the station. He had the bugle with him. The man Connors he identified was in Ashley-road, but he did not see him on the station premises. He also recognised McAllan, who was behind witness, but he could not say if he took any part in the affair. Connors had no cap on, and so far as witness could see neither he nor McAllan had anything in their hands. McAllan was a staff man and the other was a patient, the former having been at the camp for about two years.

By the Jury - It was strictly against orders for any man in blue to be out of camp without a pass. He estimated the crowd as between 300 and. 400. Witness had been at the camp three years.

BUGLER'S APPEARANCE.

By Detective Inspector Ferrier - On the way down some of the men pulled up fences. Major Ross gave instructions for the order to be passed to the bugler to desist blowing. A piece of brick knocked off witness's cap.

The bugler in questioned arrived from the camp and went into the witness box. He was cautioned by the Coroner that his name had been mentioned in connection with the riot, and although he was not bound to give evidence then, whatever he might say would be given in evidence against him if occasion arose.

The Coroner - Do you desire to give evidence?

The Bugler-I have no evidence to give.

The Coroner- Very well. I'll take that as no evidence.

Divisional Detective Inspector Ferrier having repeated his evidence given at Bow-street.

The Coroner told the jury that was the extent of the evidence he proposed to call.

Mr. Ede expressed the jury desire to hear reliable evidence from a medical officer at camp that no man was medically treated at the camp after the riot other than those in custody.

Inspector-Ferrier replied that he had gone fully into the matter, having been working night and day, and as far as he could ascertain those were the only persons who were injured in the riot. He could find no persons other

than P-c. Rose and R.-S.-M. Parsons who could identify a single man present during the riot.

SUMMING UP.

In his summing up the Coroner, having expressed deep sympathy upon the efficient conduct of the police during the riot, reviewed the evidence and said that it struck him that the motor fire engine would have been an excellent thing to have used to disperse the crowd. A surprising fact was that there were only four military police in the town, but Major Cornwallis was approached in the matter, although it was too late now as the camp, he understood, was to be removed. One question before the jury was "Is this a riot within the meaning of the Act?" If so all the men concerned were responsible. If the man who actually struck the blow which killed Sergt. Green had been identified he (the Coroner) would have advised them to return a verdict of "Wilful murder." No doubt the men were working for one end, namely, the release of two prisoners detained there, and if one had committed manslaughter all those who participated in the affair were guilty of manslaughter as well as the man who actually struck the fatal blow. Therefore, if they agreed that these six men, who were in arrest, took part in the riot, his instruction to them was that they were guilty of manslaughter. The bugle was sounded, but while there was no evidence that Todd was present at the time, it was for the jury to consider how far he anticipated the riot. There were no marks on him.

VERDICT.

The jury retired, and on returning after fifty minutes the foreman said they were agreed that the death of Station-sergt. Green was caused by a blow or blows on the head received while on duty during the riot at the police station in Ashley-road, Epsom, on the night of June 17th and 18th. The six Canadian soldiers committed for trial at Bow-street Police Court and the bugler Todd participated in that riot with others of the Canadian forces unknown, all of whom they found, guilty of manslaughter. They were of opinion that the police acted with discretion and great valour during the whole of the proceedings. They were further of opinion that the management of the inquiry by Divisional Detective Inspector Ferrier was worthy of commendation. They also desired to express their deepest sympathy with the invalid widow and daughters of the deceased officer, whose ready response in plain clothes to the call of duty deprived him in some measure of protection from such an attack as was made, and added to the high tradition of the force to which he belonged.

Todd, who is 20 years of age, was warned by the Coroner that he would have to take his trial with the other men at the Assizes, and was taken into custody by the civil police.

The jury's fees were given to deceased's wife and family.