

THE CITY ARMS

The frank and fascinating history of a city institution

A MARRIED WOMAN SAT ON EACH KNEE

Pub-goer claimed his pocket was picked as trio drank beer and brandy together



May 1860
MARY Ann Peach of the City Arms was summoned for permitting disorderly conduct in her house.

She pleaded "Not Guilty". Elizabeth Vincent was also charged with picking a pocket.

Matthew Oxley deposed that he was at the City Arms and he went there with two married women called Sarah Fry and Elizabeth Vincent. They went into the bar where they first had some beer and then some brandy together. There was no one else present while they were there. The servant brought in the beer and Mrs Peach brought in the brandy

and water while the females Fry and Vincent were present. The women were sitting on his knees, one on each knee, but not when Mrs Peach entered the room.

He did not believe he saw either of them sitting on his knees but he could not swear that Mrs Peach did not see them sitting on his knees.

Oxley said that he had his pocket picked while the women were there. He said he had found Vincent's hand in his pocket. He was not aware that Mrs Peach knew that the women were with him.

They were there for about an hour and three quarters and Mrs Peach did not stay long

when she brought the liquor in.

Elizabeth Vincent recalled the event and said she and Fry had had two quarts of beer which Oxley paid for and neither she nor Fry sat on Oxley's knee. They were not drunk and she did not pick Oxley's pocket.

Mr Oxley then asked to address the court.

"Will you allow me to speak?"

The Bench "yes"

Oxley: "I have since slept and I am not of the same mind as before. Perhaps you will let the matter drop. I have no other evidence than myself. I now don't know if it was

Vincent or some other person standing near. I can't say which."

Their Worships said he would be sworn and that they would decide if there was enough evidence to convict Mrs Peach or Mrs Vincent.

Oxley then deposed: "I had a pint of cider and then some brandy and water and a screw of tobacco at the City Arms. When I went to pay for the brandy I then missed the money that was in my pocket. I had 17s 4d in my pocket. There were three of us there."

Mr Welch prosecuting: "You must have been pretty well gone in drink."

Oxley: "All my money was

gone from my pocket except a halfpenny and I charged the women with taking my money immediately I missed it. They soon cut it when they knew I had no cash. They were soon out of sight" (Laughter in court)

Mr Welch: "Where were the women sitting?"

Oxley: "They were not sitting far from me. Well, if I may speak the truth they were sitting on my lap."

(Roars of laughter)

Mr Welch: "Both of them"

Oxley: "Yes sir." (Renewed laughter) I did not feel them searching my pockets. The money was in my left hand pocket. I informed Mrs Peach

but she did not search them from what I know of. I lost the money while they were both there. I do not know which of them did it. One must have picked my pocket and the other received the money."

"Vincent was on my left knee and Fry on my right knee." (More laughter) "It was Sarah Fry that left first."

After consulting together the Magistrates said there was no proof that the prisoner Vincent stole the money and therefore dismissed the case. The Magistrates had ordered Sergeant Boug to summon Mrs Peach for allowing disorderly conduct in her house but this was also dismissed.

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Prisoner
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