



History:

Topic:	Mystery of the Missing Cashbox -1901
Date of Record:	June 2026
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Notes:	A Hargrave Whodunit. Do you believe the main suspect Emily Payne was innocent?

Mystery of the Missing Cashbox - 1901

Hargrave related law reports in the local newspapers in the late Victorian era rarely cover anything more serious than petty theft, poaching, drunken behaviour, or mild assault. In 1901 the case of the missing cashbox containing items estimated as being worth £77 (c. £12,000 today) was potential larceny of an unprecedented scale for Hargrave, when the annual salary for an agricultural labourer was on average half this amount. There was also added interest in the case when the main suspect accused of stealing the cashbox, was closely related to the cashbox owner's wife.

The case concerned Alfred Pettitt (1867 - 1938) a butcher and his first wife Sarah Mison (1865 - 1921) who were living with five of their children on Wickhambrook Road, Hargrave, in the summer of 1901. They were visited by Emily Chandler (Payne) (1865) a cousin of Sarah along with her youngest son Robert Samuel Chandler (1890 - 1970). Emily's home at that time was with partner William Chandler (1856 - 1915) a Railway Coal Porter at 42 Mozart Street, Paddington along with Robert and three of William's work colleagues who were boarders.



Alfred Pettitt



Sarah Pettitt

On Saturday, August 17th, 1901, Alfred and Sarah were away from their home. On Alfred's return he found his cashbox missing. Suspecting Emily was responsible, he questioned her, but not satisfied with her denials, he called in the local police, who felt following investigation, that there was sufficient evidence for her to be charged with theft.

Her first court appearance was in front of magistrates on 24th August, where the case was heard, but it was then adjourned due to non-attendance of two key witnesses and Emily was remanded in custody. Following a further hearing on the 31st August, she was committed for trial on the 26th October, where the case unexpectedly collapsed.

Considerable evidence was laid before the Magistrates which pointed towards her guilt and was to influence their decision to send Emily for trial by jury.

1. During the likely times that the cashbox disappeared on the Saturday in question, Emily was the only adult in the house. Others present along with her, were her own 11½ years old son, and the Pettitt's children, the eldest girl Julia being 14 years old and the others being under 11 years old,
2. When Emily was told the nearby pond was being raked to find the cashbox she is alleged to have said, "It's not in the pond," and then when being asked where it was then, she said "I don't know."
3. Emily is reported as being very nervous under questioning by Mr Pettitt and by the police.
4. When Emily's bedroom was examined by the police on the Sunday, a fresh hole was found in the straw mattress to her bed, big enough to hide the missing cashbox, but nothing was found.
5. Only after some time in to the investigation, did Emily state that she had had something stolen from her own cashbox, which she said was also broken open and a sovereign taken.
6. On the Saturday evening Emily walked to the Cocks Head Inn with Mr and Mrs Alfred Murkin, popping in the Pettitt's house alone, which she said was to get her cape, which was said to be downstairs, but she then went upstairs to her bedroom which she said was to close her bedroom window.
7. At the Inn, Alfred Stiff, the landlord's son stated that he witnessed Emily meeting with Fred Sergeant about nine o'clock on the Saturday night and that she said to him "Here, Fred, I have got some change for you," and took her purse from her pocket and handed a paper folded up in her hands to Sergeant.
8. On questioning Sergeant said he met Emily at the Inn, he refuted that he received anything from her, although on cross-examination he admitted that whilst theirs was not an intimate friendship, they had become "the talk of the village."
9. The most damning evidence came from Emily's own son, Robert Chandler, who initially stated that on the Saturday evening he was sitting near the open window, as his mother went out of the front door. Under her cape he said he could see a dark box with a yellow rim around it, which he thought was made of tin because he heard the beads on her cape tapping against it. He then said he saw her loiter near the garden hedge, implying she may have hidden something there.

Whilst most of the initial evidence presented was circumstantial it was the statement of an eye witness, the son of the suspect, that was crucial. Thus it was a great surprise when at the October trial, when called to give his evidence Robert effectively retracted his statement, saying he had told untruths, and indicated that he had only volunteered as a witness because he thought he might receive some payment for attending.

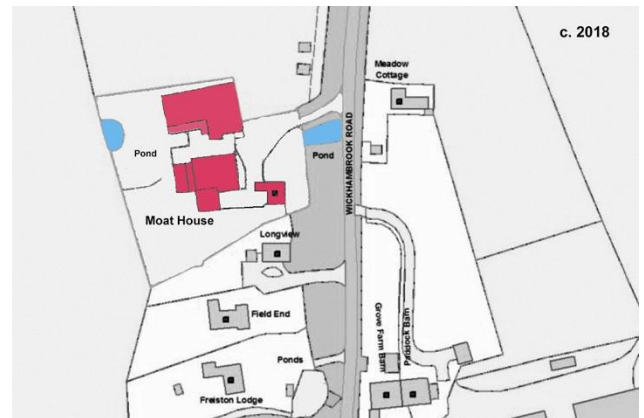
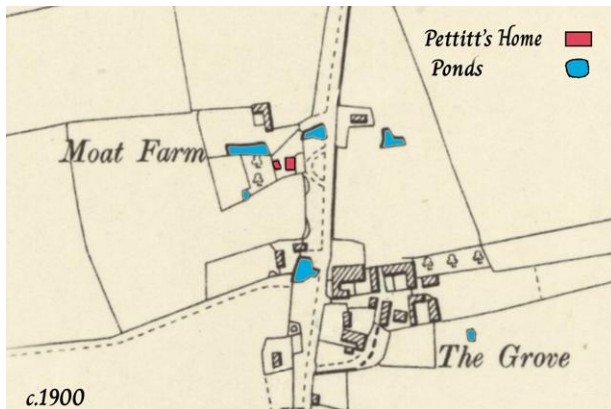
This admission was pivotal in undermining the prosecution's case, and the Chairman of Magistrates decided that this eye witness could not be relied on, and thus there was no material case to answer. The Jury duly found Emily "Not guilty" and the Chairman severely admonished her son saying if he had been older he may well have been charged with perjury.

The boy Robert was certainly creative in his lies, as he gave a description of a cashbox which it was unlikely he had seen before, complete with a tin sound made from the tapping of his mother's beads. He had also put in the minds of the justices that a potential hiding place had been the garden hedge. Mr. Stewart prosecutor interestingly also commented that despite his denials, Robert had probably been influenced by others to initially say one version of events and then deny it later.

Also although Robert denied that the case had been discussed with anyone before the 26th October trial, he had returned home to London with his mother Emily to live with her and her partner between

the end of the magistrates hearing held at the end of August and the trial date. This would have given his parents ample time to suggest to him that he reconsider his evidence.

It is for the reader to decide regardless of Robert's testimony, whether on balance Emily was guilty after all. There were no further reports in the local papers regarding the crime, so it is assumed that any alternative "true" perpetrator was never brought to justice. The twist in the tale of this story is that ten years later, whilst the Pettitt's pond was being cleaning out, the cashbox was discovered with most of the original contents missing. This was the one place Emily was so adamant that it would not be found!



Moat Farm, Hargrave c.1900 and c.2018

Below are the detailed court reports relating to the theft as printed in the local press.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 24th August 1901.

THINGOE PETTY SESSIONS. WEDNESDAY.

Before Rev. J. White (chairman), Lieut. Col. A. H. Josselyn, Lieut. Col. Trafford Rawson, Lieut. Col. R. Anderson, Mr O. D. Johnson, and Mr. R. Burrell.

SERIOUS CHARGE OF LARCENY AGAINST A WOMAN AT HARGRAVE.

A SINGULAR CASE

CASE ADJOURNED

Emily Chandler, described as a married woman of Mozart Street, Queen's Park, Paddington, London, on remand, was charged with stealing a cash box containing a deposit note for £50, and a cheque for £6, and about £20 in gold, as well as a lady's silver watch valued at a £1, the property of Alfred Pettitt, butcher, of Hargrave, on Saturday, August 17th.

Mr. H. J. Salmon prosecuted, and pointed out that the defendant went by the name of Emily Chandler, but her real name was Payne. She was not a married woman, but had been living with a man at Paddington. He regretted having to bring the evidence forward by her son, honest straightforward little lad who spoke straightforwardly of her as his mother. Mr. Salmon then went on to deal with the facts of the case given in the evidence following, and submitted that if the evidence of the prosecutor himself and the boy, whom he characterised as the most intelligent lad had ever had to deal with in his experience, and taking into account other facts of the case, he thought the Magistrates would consider he had made out prima facie case.

He then called Alfred Pettitt, butcher, of Hargrave, who said defendant was his wife's cousin. She had been in the habit of spending the summer holidays as his guest, she lived in Paddington, and came on the 3rd of the present month. On the top of the stairs of his house there were two bedrooms opposite each other, one of which she occupied. He had a clothes box in his room, and in it he kept his cash box locked, but did not lock his clothes box. He last saw the cash box on Friday morning in its proper place, when it contained a deposit note £50, cheque for £6, and about in £20 in gold, as well as lady's silver watch value £1. The defendant returned from Barrow about 8 o'clock on Friday, having left about 10 o'clock in the morning. In his absence his wife and children were in the house. On the Saturday he and his wife were away from home. Defendant and his daughter and children were left in the house. He returned about 8 o'clock on Saturday, and about 8.15 defendant came into the room in which they were having supper, appearing rather strange. Her son and his own children were in the room with him, and after about two minutes she opened the door and went upstairs. In about two minutes she came down again and went out the front door, and returned about ten minutes to ten o'clock. On Sunday morning about ten o'clock he went to his clothes box to deposit the money in his cash box which he had taken on Saturday, and found the cash box gone. He asked his wife, who knew nothing about it, and then went to the defendant. He said "Emma, have you seen my cash box." She said "I have not seen it." She was all of tremble and could not speak, and had to sit down. He told her to stay where she was, and he went for P.-c. Cutting. He returned later with P.-c. Cutting, and made a thorough search of the premises and raked the pond. Not being successful, he went up and saw her in her room, and again asked her where it was. He told her they had been raking the pond, and she said, "It's not in the pond." He told her that if she knew it was not in the pond she must know where it was, but all she said was "I don't know." He kept the circumstance from the knowledge of the children until 8 o'clock on Sunday night. On making it known to Robt. Chandler, the child of this woman, he made a communication to him, and also took him to fence in the garden. On the Sunday night defendant said she could not go to bed because she could not rest, and told her if she meant sitting up he should sit up with her. He sat up all night with her, and they neither of them went to bed. During that time he asked her where it was, and she said, "I don't know; it's not in the pond." The next morning obtained warrant, and had her apprehended.

Robt. Chandler, son of the defendant, who said would be 12 years of age on the 11th March next, deposed that he was staying with his uncle, where had spent previous holidays. He had no desire to say a word against his mother except what was true. On Saturday night he was in the room with his uncle and the others between 8 and 9 o'clock. He was sitting near the window, which was open, after supper, and his mother (defendant) went out of the front door. She was wearing the cape which she had on at the present time, and he could see a dark box with yellow rim round showing under her cape. He thought the box was tin because one of the beads ticked against it. When she got out of the garden she went towards the public-house, and when passing the fence she looked at it.

Julia Pettitt, daughter of prosecutor, said her father and mother were out Saturday, and no one was in the house or came there except herself and the children. Defendant was looking after the house-work, and witness was outside looking after the fowls. On the Friday defendant was out all day.

P.-c. Geo. Cutting, stationed at Chevington, said on Sunday night from information he received he visited Pettitt's house with him, and from what he told him he went to defendant's bedroom where she was sitting. She was in very nervous state. He said to her, "A very unpleasant thing has happened in this house; a cash-box has been stolen and its contents." He cautioned her, and asked her if she objected to having her pockets searched. He then searched defendant, but found nothing referring to the robbery. He searched her two boxes by her permission, and found nothing there. On the Monday he obtained warrant and arrested her. She made no reply to the charge.

In answer to Col. Anderson, witness said that he had not made any enquiries at Barrow, and Mr. Salmon added that defendant was at Barrow on Friday, and the box was seen on Friday morning for the last time.

P.-c. Cutting added that he had since made a thorough examination, and helped prosecutor to rake the pond. He had also made a thorough search of the premises and surroundings. When charged defendant said, "All I have to say is I am not guilty." She added that she had three witnesses she could call, but seemed surprised they were not in attendance.

Supt. Emmerson said he was quite aware who she meant, but she had not asked for them. He told her anyone she required to give evidence on her behalf would be communicated with.

The defendant, who chose to give evidence on her own behalf, was sworn, and first gave the name of Emily Chandler, corrected herself and said her real name was Emily Payne. She was at Mr. Pettitt's doing house work on Saturday, whilst Mr. and Mrs. Pettitt were out. She went out about 3.30 p.m., and when she returned it was just 20 minutes to 9 o'clock. She went in and sat down for about five minutes. She then went upstairs and shut her bedroom window. She took her cape off the peg in the hall and put it on. Eliza Murkin and Alfred Murkin stood on the road as she came out, and she went straight on to the "Cock's Head" public-house with them. They went into the middle room, and she went to the end room by herself and spoke to Fred Sergeant. He subsequently followed her out and they went down the road together, and it struck 10 o'clock just as she got into Pettitt's. No one was in except Julia, and Mrs. Pettitt came in directly afterwards.

In answer to the Chairman said she had nothing to say about Sunday.

Mr. Salmon: you said on Saturday you went out at 2.30, and did not return until 20 minutes to 9 o'clock.

What had you been doing all that time?

Witness: I had been down to the post.

Mr. Salmon: What had you been doing all that time.

Witness: I was at Mrs. Murkins; Mr. Murkin did not come in until 25 minutes to 9 o'clock.

In further cross-examination witness said most of the time from 8 o'clock until 9 o'clock she was spending with Mrs. Murkin. She was simply keeping her company because her son was so late.

Pressed by Mr. Salmon, witness said the only thing she went upstairs for was to shut the window.

In answer to question why she called at Pettitt's before going on to the public-house, she said she wanted her cape.

Mr. Salmon: You can give no other reason for leaving the Murkins and coming home?

Witness: I told them I was going home to put my cape on.

Mr. Salmon: Can you explain why you were nervous?

Witness: I felt upset at the loss of the box, I cannot help them to find it, I wish I could. I have heard my son say I have been a kind mother, he has always been a kind and truthful boy. I cannot explain why he should tell the tale. His description was absolutely untrue, he is telling a deliberate falsehood.

The Chairman after brief deliberation said they should adjourn the case until that day week for the attendance of the Murkins and Sergeant, and summonses would be issued for their attendance. Defendant could have bail in two sureties of £10 each, but as sureties were forthcoming when the Court rose, defendant was removed in custody.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 31st August 1901.

THINGOE PETTY SESSIONS. Wednesday.

Before the Rev, J. White (chairman), Lieut. Col. A. H. Josselyn, Lieut. Col. B. Anderson, Mr. O. D. Johnson, and Mr. B. Burrell, Mr. Duncan Parker did not adjudicate.

THE SERIOUS CHARGE OF LARCENY AGAINST A WOMAN AT HARGRAVE.

DEFENDANT COMMITTED TO THE QUARTER SESSIONS.

Emily Pawns, alias Chandler, described as a married woman of Mozart Street, Queen's Park, Paddington, London, was again charged with stealing a cash box containing deposit note for £50 and cheque for £6 and about £20 in gold, as well as a lady's silver watch valued at £1, the property of Alfred Pettitt, butcher, of Hargrave, on Saturday, August 17th.

The case was adjourned from last week in order that two witnesses might be summoned give evidence on behalf of the defendant.

Mr. H. J. Salmon again appeared for the prosecution, and reviewed the additional evidence he intended calling, and thought after the evidence given by the defendant in the witness box, it would be advisable to call the wife of the prosecutor, as well as recall the prosecutor and the Policeman.

Mrs. Sarah Pettitt, wife of the prosecutor, Alfred Pettitt, a butcher, of Hargrave, said defendant had been staying with them for a fortnight; she had been in the habit of staying with them. On Friday, 16th August, defendant was out all day, and witness went the following day with her husband, when defendant was in the house with her (witness's) family. The first intimation she had of the loss was Sunday morning, about 10 o'clock. She and her husband and P.-c. Cutting went up into defendant's room during Sunday evening, where she had been all day, except when she came down for meals, Witness asked her if she could tell them where the box was, and she said she could not say where it was. She seemed very strange and nervous, and she asked her why she went upstairs on the Saturday evening, and she replied she went up to get her cape. Witness replied she could not have gone up for that because it was downstairs on the sofa in the parlour; she put it there on Saturday morning. They examined her bed on Sunday morning. It was straw mattress under a feather bed. They found a hole in the middle of the tick, which appeared to be recently torn, about the size of a sheet of blue paper lying on the table, used by the Justices. Three days previous there was no hole there. The straw looked as if it had been pushed up by something. There was room to put the cash box in.

Defendant said there was hole in the middle of the mattress all the time she was there. The Chairman thought rather remarkable that Cutting, in his evidence in chief, said not word about the hole in the mattress last week.

Mr. Salmon: I am afraid it was not my fault in not asking him.

Mr. Burrell: The defendant was present during the time this examination of the mattress was made.

By Mr. Salmon: They made the remark that it was fresh and she made no reply.

Defendant: No one said anything about my box being broken open and my money being lost, that was the reason I was nervous.

Witness: You made no complaint.

Defendant: When I went there the money I found had gone, and I told him (Pettitt) someone had burst my box open and a sovereign had been taken.

Witness: You made no statement to us about that, nor yet to the policeman.

Mr. Salmon: She said nothing about this in her evidence.

Defendant said she was nervous because her box was broken and sovereign had been stolen and her purse was gone. She found that out on the Sunday morning, and was going to tell them just as Pettitt was coming upstairs.

The Chairman: In you evidence last week you said nothing about it.

Defendant: No, sir.

Alfred Pettitt confirmed his wife's statement, adding that he did not think to give this evidence last week. They pulled the mattress to pieces with the hope of finding the treasure, but did not. He heard no complaint from defendant about her box being broken open until Sunday, when she said something about losing a sovereign, but she said nothing about her box being broken open. He was sure her box was all right on Sunday when he went to her to ask her about his box.

The Magistrates' Clerk (Mr. B. H. Wilson) thought it was strange the policeman said nothing about the straw mattress last week.

P.-c. George Cutting, stationed at Chevington, also gave evidence as to searching the defendant's bedroom, and confirmed the evidence in regard to the straw mattress. He considered the point with regard to the mattress was included in the evidence last week when they said search was made. Defendant made no complaint as to her loss to him.

Alfred Stiff, son of the landlord of the "Cock's Head," Hargrave, deposed being in the taproom with Fred Sergeant about nine o'clock the Saturday night in question. Defendant came from the middle room into the passage. Sergeant went to her and she said "Here, Fred, I have got some change for you," and took her purse from her pocket and handed a paper folded up in her hands to Sergeant. He did not know what was in the paper. They then stood and talked together in the passage in whispering way. subsequently saw Sergeant leave.

This was the case for the prosecution.

Eliza Murkin was then called by the defendant.

The Chairman: It is in evidence that this woman spent part of Saturday afternoon with you?

Witness: That is so.

She left about 9 o'clock? — Yes, she went into Pettitt's house, and then we arranged to go to the "Cock's Head" together. She said she was going to put the little boy to bed, and get her cape, and it was then they proposed going to the "Cock's Head." She said she would be between five and ten minutes, and her son followed her, and defendant came out as they arrived there. Defendant went into the middle room of the public house with them, and had a drink, and then went into the other room and returned again to them. She then left, and did not see defendant again. Sergeant returned with them in the middle room.

In answer to Mr. Salmon witness said she was very nearly blind.

Alfred Murkin deposed that on the night in question he saw defendant come straight down the path from Pettit's house to the road to them, and they went to the "Cock's Head." He said to her, "I see you open the door."

By Mr. Salmon: He heard Sergeant's voice in the "Cock's Head."

By Col. Anderson: He heard no whispering.

In answer to the Chairman witness said he could not see that defendant had anything with her.

By Mr. Salmon: Defendant never stopped on coming out of the house. She came as fast as she could walk.

The Chairman: If she had a cash box could you have seen it?

Witness: No, sir, you could not. As far I know she was carrying nothing.

Frederick Sergeant, late gamekeeper, living at Hargrave, said he now worked for Mr. Boldero as a labourer. He was at the "Cock's Head" on the Saturday night in question, between 9 and 10 o'clock, when defendant called him into the passage from the tap room. She said she had some change for him, but she gave him nothing at all. He did not know what she meant. She asked him if he was going down the road, and he said "No, not just then," and she said, "I am going." Witness said, "All right," and went back into the tap room and finished one pint, and had another after she left him. He did not know when she left the house. When he got down the road he overtook her, and went about 100 yards with her. They parted at the bottom of the hill, and she went on.

Mr. Salmon: How long have you known this woman?

—Witness: I am sure I cannot say how long I have known her; since I have been friendly with the Pettitt's since Pettit has been at Hargrave.

Have you known her for the last four or five years? - I don't know how long it is.

Has she been in the habit of coming down there for holiday? – Yes.

Pressed by Mr. Salmon, witness denied that had been very intimate with the defendant. He could not account for her saying she had some change for him. After further cross-examination by Mr. Salmon, witness admitted that they had been the talk of the village.

The Magistrates committed defendant to take her trial at the Quarter Sessions, and allowed bail, herself in £10, and two sureties in £10 each. William Chandler and Robert Payne, brother of defendant, became the sureties.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 26th October 1901.

WEST SUFFOLK QUARTER SESSIONS

Before Colonel Barnardiston (Chairman) and other Justices

TRIALS OF PRISONERS

THE CHARGE OF LARCENY AGAINST A WOMAN AT HARGRAVE. – AN ABRUPT TERMINATION.

Emily Payne, alias Chandler, aged 36, bailed on committal, was indicted for feloniously stealing a cash box containing a deposit note for £50, a cheque for £6, about £20 in gold, and a silver watch value £1, the property of Alfred Pettitt, at Hargrave, on the 17th August, 1901.— Mr. C. E. Malden prosecuted (instructed by Messrs. Salmon and Sons, Bury), and prisoner was defended.—The Chairman, however, who considered the prisoner should be defended, deputed Mr. Stewart to conduct the defence.

The facts of the case as laid before the Jury by Mr. Malden showed that prisoner was the cousin of Mrs. Pettitt, wife of the prosecutor, Alfred Pettitt, a butcher, of Hargrave, and was on a visit there at the

time of the alleged offence, as had been her custom for several years, she came on August 3rd to stay with the Pettitt's, and slept in a bedroom at the top of the stairs, opposite prosecutor's bedroom, where he kept his cash box in a clothes box, which was unlocked, the cash box, however, being locked. Prosecutor last saw it on the Friday previous, with the articles in as mentioned in the charge. On the Saturday he was away from home all day on business, as was also his wife. On the day (Sunday) following, about 10 o'clock, he went upstairs with the object of putting his money into his cash box and found it gone. He mentioned this to his wife, but not his children, and afterwards communicated with the police, and a thorough search was made.

Prosecutor told prisoner about the loss, and that they had dragged the pond, etc., when she appeared nervous and excited, and stated in reply that it was not in the pond, but added in reply to a question that she knew nothing about it. On the Saturday prisoner was left in the house with prosecutor's little girl, 14 years old, and other little children, all under 11 years of age, and no one else came to the house. Prisoner was alone in the house whilst the daughter, Julia, was feeding the chickens. After the police visited the house a search was made, and on her boxes being turned out nothing was found there. In a further search a hole was found cut in the mattress of the bed in which prisoner had been sleeping, and the straw pushed aside, like a rabbit's hole, big enough to admit a considerable sized article, but there was no cash-box or money found in the bed. Previous to that no hole had been found in the mattress.

On Sunday Mr. Pettitt mentioned the loss to his children, in addition to whom there was a little boy named Robert Chandler, son of the prisoner, aged 11½ years, who was staying in the house, and he said he saw his mother go out on the Saturday evening with something which looked like a box, with yellow lines, under her cape, which had beads on, and which he heard rattling against the box. He saw her go past the window with the box. Mrs. Chandler, counsel pointed out, went out that evening, and returned and went out again when the lad saw her. When asked why she went to the bedroom she replied she went to get her cape, which, however, was downstairs at the time, and when intimated of that fact by Mrs. Pettitt, she replied that she went upstairs to shut the window. She afterwards went to the "Cock Inn," where she met a man named Sargeant, and a conversation which took place between them in the passage was overheard, when prisoner was heard to say, "I have got some change for you," and after some conversation they left. Counsel added there was no doubt the cash-box disappeared sometime on the Saturday, and laid stress on the evidence of the little boy who said he distinctly saw his mother go past the window carrying something under her arm.

— Police-Sergt. Emsden produced plans of the locality in which the alleged offence took place.

— Alfred Pettitt, the prosecutor, butcher, of Hargrave, deposed to the facts already stated.

— Cross-examined by Mr. Stewart: The back door of his house was not locked whilst he was away on the Saturday. The box which his cash-box was left was unlocked. He did not hear anyone move about his room on the evening the alleged offence was committed. The hole in the mattress increased the suspicion in his mind.

— Julia Pettitt, aged 14, daughter of the prosecutor, also confirmed Counsel's statement.

By Mr. Stewart: It would have been quite easy for anyone to get in by the back door whilst she was feeding the chickens.

— Sarah Pettitt also confirmed the facts already stated.

— P.-c. Geo. Cutting, stationed at Chevington, also gave evidence, and in cross-examination by Mr. Stewart said he should not be surprised at woman being agitated on hearing of the loss of the cash box.

— Robt. Chandler, aged 11 years, son of the prisoner, was called, and a discussion arose as to whether witness, who it transpired had been living with his parents in London since the case was tried before the Magistrates, should be treated as a hostile witness. In answer to the Chairman, witness said he had not spoken to anyone about the case since he left Hargrave. Neither his father nor yet his mother had said a word to him about it. Questioned by the Chairman if his father told him why he was coming to Bury that day, witness was silent, and afterwards added his father simply said he was coming to Bury, that was all; he did not say why he was coming.

— On Mr. Malden continuing the examination, witness said that before the Magistrates, he said he was sitting near the open window and saw his mother go out. That was a mistake; he never saw her go out. He said a great many things which were not true because he was not thinking. He said the box was there, but did not know anything about it, and told a story.

— Mr. Malden: Why did you tell a story?

— Witness: I was not thinking. Julia said we should get 2s. 6d. for coming as witnesses.

— Mr. Malden: If you told the truth you would get your 2s. 6d.

— Mr. Stewart here asked if the jury could attach any importance to a word of the evidence of the boy who had just admitted that he told a fabrication of lies, and argued that they could not convict woman on such evidence.

— Mr. Malden said the case entirely depended upon that witness, and he could not carry it any further.

— The Jury did not think it necessary to go any farther with it, and Mr. Stewart applying for formal verdict, the Jury returned a verdict of not guilty and the prisoner was discharged.

— The Chairman, addressing the witness Robert Chandler, said he had been a bad, naughty boy, and if he had been older he would be put into the dock for perjury. The Chairman added: You are a very bad boy; go away, go away, disgraceful.

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 26th October 1901.

FRIDAY EVENING, October 25th, 1901.

IS CRIME DECREASING?

To judge from the calendar at the West Suffolk Quarter Sessions, held on Tuesday, at Bury, there would appear to be an increase of crime in the county, and some of the charges, if such a distinction may be made, were of a serious character. This is not at all reassuring to the public generally, and especially to those who are connected with philanthropic societies, whose self-imposed task is to endeavour to bring about a decrease in the statistics of crime in our country, to the optimist who claims, thanks the advance made by education, that crime is decreasing throughout the land. Everyone will re-echo the remark made by Col. Barnardiston, the Chairman of the Quarter Sessions, that this is purely accidental, and that crime is not really increasing in Suffolk.....

One of the most serious charges in connection with the business at the Sessions occurred in a case in which a female, named Payne, was indicted with stealing a cash box containing cheques, notes, and gold to the value of £76, and a silver watch, the property of a butcher at Hargrave. At the hearing before the magistrates, the principal witness against the prisoner was her son, aged 11 years, who stated that he saw her leave the house with a box under her arm, and heard the beads of her cape rattling against it.

On Tuesday, however, the boy denied in toto his previous statement, adding that he had told an untruth. The case consequently utterly collapsed, and the Chairman severely reprimanded the boy, who, had he been older, might have found himself in the dock charged with perjury. Whatever may be the merits of the case for or against the person charged, it is a regrettable fact that a boy of such tender years should have been in such position. It is difficult in such cases know where the fault lies for the boy's perversion, but those who read the case will come to the conclusion that some influence had been exerted upon him from some direction. It is curious, but it is frequently assumed by some Justices that what is said at the preliminary hearing before them is true, whereas it is far more likely that the truth would be brought out either at Court of Quarter Sessions or Assizes. The Chairman administered well-timed admonition to the lad, but a word of warning might have had salutary effect upon those connected with the case.

There is food for much thought.....

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 28th October 1911.

HARGRAVE.

RECOVERY OF LOST CASH-BOX The mysterious disappearance of a cash-box containing money and valuables, belonging to Mr. Alfred Pettitt, butcher. which occupied the attention of the police about ten years ago has been solved. While cleaning out a pond near Mr. Pettitt's house, Henry Cross employee, unearthed, from the mud at the bottom, the cash-box, which showed signs of having been broken open, and was evidently sunk by means of a pound weight, which was found inside, and which disappeared at the same time as the cash-box. The only other contents were a purse containing a halfpenny and a watch. None of the money or notes originally contained in the cash-box have ever been recovered.

Footnote 1:

Interestingly around this time butcher Alfred Pettitt also appeared in court and was found guilty of illegal activities and was also severely admonished by magistrates for encouraging illegal actions by others.

The following item was printed in the Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Standard on the 28th May 1907.

THINGOE PETTY SESSIONS.

WEDNESDAY.

— Before the Rev. J. White (chairman), Lieut.-Col. R. Anderson, Mr. J. H. Thornhill, Mr. R. Burrell, Lieut.-Col. H. Trafford Rawson, Lieut.-Col. F. d'Arcy Newcome, and Col. Henry Fortescue.

NO EXCUSE.

Alfred Pettit, butcher, Hargrave, was charged with unlawfully having in his possession 50 partridge eggs at Hargrave on May 13.

—Defendant pleaded guilty.

—Mr. C. E. Salmon prosecuted, and in stating the facts of the case to the Bench, said on the day in question P.C. Frost, of Chevington, was on duty in the parish of Hargrave when he met the defendant

coming from the direction of the Fox Inn. Having reasons to suspect him of having game eggs in his possession, witness asked him if he had any eggs on him. He replied, “ No.” The constable searched him, and in his various pockets found 50 partridge eggs. The constable asked him if he wished to account for them. He replied, “No, you caught me fair. This is the most I have ever had at once. I can’t get out of it, and you must do as you like.”

These men, suggested Mr. Salmon, were the very persons who corrupted the labourers, and they, knowing where there was a market for the eggs, took the eggs from the nests. In his opinion these kind of people deserved no consideration from the Bench, and he asked them to inflict what penalty they thought fit. In referring to the constable, he said P.C. Frost had only been stationed at Chevington three months. This was the second seizure he had made, and both of the men were persons who indulged in the trade. He thought this showed that the constable was a very sharp and quick officer, and in his opinion deserved some words of commendation from the Bench.

— The Chairman said the defendant was one of those men who went about the country and encouraged the labourers and boys on the farms to break the game laws. There was no excuse for him whatever, and if there were no such men as the defendant they would not have half the quantity of eggs stolen.

—The Bench convicted, and fined defendant 2s. 6d. per egg (£6 5s.) and 7s. 2d. costs, or, in default, one month’s imprisonment. The money was paid.

Footnote 2:

Further details of the Pettitt Family can be found in the Family and Memory Sections of this website.

Nicholas Newman June 2026.