

**THE  
KINGSCLERE  
MURDERS  
OCTOBER 1944**

*Preface.*

*The data contained herein has been extracted from the reference sources detailed on page 3. The data has been copied but not amended or altered in any way to ensure that a true and accurate record of events has been established according to the source data. The data has been collated by Paul E. Fay the son of Emily Millicent Fay (nee Jewell), Emily Jewell being the daughter of Frederick Jewell who was present in the Crown Inn at the time of the incident. I have purposefully not altered or amended the data in any way shape or form to ensure that those of you who may be interested and who read this can form their own conclusions regarding this incident. Whilst researching and collating the information I came across a number of anomalies and conflicting statements that lead me to believe that there is more to this incident than has been reported. I have not included my thoughts regarding the incident but leave you to draw your own conclusions regarding unanswered questions and conflicting statements. At the time this incident occurred there were a number of similar incidents throughout the country. The following are extracts from various newspaper and government papers reflecting the reasons given at the time for this and other similar incidents.*

*On October the 5<sup>th</sup> 1944 a shooting incident occurred in Kingsclere, Hampshire. This incident was kept quite by the allied forces at the time as they feared that Anglo/American relations may be affected. This is just one of many incidents that happened during the Second World War.*

*Another reason for suppressing information about this and other incidents is that they mainly involved the coloured American soldiers.*

*During the Second World War approximately ten percent of the occupying American forces in Britain were coloured, the British government stated, at the time, that this was an unwelcome intrusion to British shores.*

*Until these coloured soldiers arrived on British shores many people in Britain, particularly in rural areas had never seen a coloured person and the coloured population in Britain was negligible.*

*This incident shows the underlying feeling of the suppressed American coloured soldiers.*

*References:*

- 1 *The Haunted Pub Guide' Guy Lyon Playfair, Javelin Books 1987*
- 2 *Haunted Inns of Hampshire' by Roger Long. Published by Power Publications, Sept 1999. Pages 52-53*
- 3 *Hampshire Tales of Mystery & Murder' by Ian Fox. Published by Countryside books 2001, Pages 31-39*
- 4 *The Hants and Berks Gazette Friday October 13th 1944, The Kingsclere Shooting Affray'*
- 5 *Hampshire Magazine, 'Massacre at Kingsclere'*
- 6 *Kingsclere Place and its people' Margaret B Ingram, 1987*
- 7 *Meeting of the Kingsclere & Whitchurch RDC Public Health, Housing and General Purposes Committee on 10th. October 1944*
- 8 *Press report of the above committee meeting, undated, said to be a local paper - Hampshire Chronicle from the layout?*
- 9 *Summary of the incident and following events prepared by the Kingsclere History Group, undated.*
- 10 *An account of his investigation by Detective Sergeant, later Superintendent Richard Whitehead, undated.*
- 11 *A newspaper article, source unknown, dated 3rd January 1958 from the Willis Museum in Basingstoke.*
- 12 *An article from the 'Hampshire Magazine' of April 1978*
- 13 *'The Secret Massacre' - an article in The Mail on Sunday 19th. June 1988.*
- 14 *"Hushed up by the allies, the forgotten massacre' Newbury Weekly News 14 Dec. 1995*
- 15 *'Murderous Night at The Crown Inn' from the Basingstoke Gazette, 1st. March 1996.*
- 16 *Statement by Mrs. Peggy Whitehead, widow of Superintendent Whitehead, who was his clerk during the investigation.*
- 17 *Information gained from Daily Herald article dd. 10th. November 1944*

**A Haunting Triple Murder**  
**THE CROWN KINGSCLERE**

Situated a short distance north west of Basingstoke The crown public house in the village of Kingsclere was the location of a gruesome triple murder and is now said to be haunted by one of the three unfortunate victims. On Thursday 5th October 1944 a US army engineering unit arrived in Kingsclere from Exeter and was stationed at Sydmonton Court. Early that evening ten of the men broke bounds and headed to the Swan pub. In the Swan they were stopped by the Regimental police and instructed to return to camp and change from their working clothes into their uniforms.

The men hitch hiked back to camp but not to change as they had been ordered. Instead the men cut through the chains of a rack of M1 carbines and took them together with 100 rounds of ammunition.

Now armed and with murderous intent, the men searched the local pubs for the Regimental Police beginning at the Swan and concluding at The Crown. Knowing their intended victims to be inside, the men took up position in the church yard opposite and waited.

On exiting the pub, Private Anderson and another Regimental Policeman named Brown were confronted by a semi circle of men armed with automatic rifles.

A hail of bullets were unleashed on the pair hitting Anderson in the chest but missing Brown altogether. Brown dived back inside remaining on the ground until the shooting had subsided, whilst Anderson was somehow able to get up and run the 150 yards to the corner of the road where he collapsed in the garden of a Mr Freddie Digweed in North Street. Unfortunately he died in the garden between two beanpoles.

The men continued to scatter fire into the crown killing another two people. One was Private Coates who was sat with his back to the window and killed by a shot to the back of the head. The other was the landlady Mrs Rose Napper whose husband had dragged her to the ground when the shooting started. Unfortunately a ricochet bullet passed through her left cheek, through her tongue and out through the right of her neck.

At 10.17 pm Station sergeant Dudman at Kingsclere rang the CID office at Andover. Detective Sergeant Dick Whitehead picked up the phone and heard " You'd better get over here right away Dick, all hells let loose."

It was about eleven by the time Sergeant Whitehead arrived at The Crown. Private Coates lay dead on the floor and Mrs Napper was in a critical condition. A US Colonel took her to Newbury Hospital but she died just as she arrived.( her tombstone is in the Echinswell Road Cemetery ).

The first of the suspects was caught by 3am and was taken back to The Crown to be questioned by Whitehead and a US Army CID agent. By Friday 17th all ten had been rounded up.

Whitehead never believed that the men regretted what they did. All he saw was that they were still full of hate. One of the murderers even fell asleep in the dock during his trial for a full ten minutes.

At their court martial in Thatcham nine of the men were sentenced to imprisonment for the whole of their natural lives. The tenth man was sentenced to 10 years but later received equal penalty when he was retried at Shepton Mallet.

The spirit of Private Anderson is said to haunt the inn to this day. Mr Napper moved out of the Crown in 1951 and the Perry family moved in.

## **Hampshire Police History Society**

**The Police Museum, Netley Training School, Hampshire**

### **Hampshire - Famous Cases**

**Robert Cameron,**

**17th. April 2002**

**The Kingsclere Shootings, 5th. October 1944**

**Synopsis**

Detective Sergeant Richard Whitehead (later Superintendent) walked into the CID office in Andover at 10.17pm on Thursday 5th. October 1944 when the Section Sergeant at Kingsclere, then in the Andover Division, telephoned to request his presence.

A group of ten American soldiers stationed in the area had come into the village armed with rifles, looking for their Regimental Police. They located them in the Crown Hotel and opened fire on the premises killing one of the policemen instantly and inflicting fatal wounds on another and fatally injuring the wife of the licensee of the premises, Mrs. Rose Napper.

Over forty-eight hours later an exhausted Det. Sgt. went home for the first time having worked straight through in conjunction with U.S. Army investigators. By this time all ten men were in custody and all later appeared before a court martial at Thatcham in Berkshire and were sentenced to life imprisonment.

An interesting aspect of this case was the likely effect of these killings on Anglo/American relations and at the time the whole affair was hushed up although there were reports of their court martial in some newspapers, notably the Daily Herald of 10th. November 1944.

General Eisenhower himself became involved and some time later requested his second-in-command to apologise to the people of Kingsclere for the affair.

Some reports speak of many other offences of rape, burglary and so forth in the area and say that local members of the Home Guard were given live ammunition to enable them to defend themselves if attacked.

The widow of detective sergeant Whitehead though takes the view that these reports were exaggerated this view is supported by the moderate tone of the minutes of the committee meeting of Kingsclere RDC at source 1 below and the summary of events prepared by the Kingsclere History Group at source 2.

**Graham A. Smith, *When Jim Crow Met John Bull: Black American Soldiers in World War II Britain.***

**Tauris, London, 1987.**

**The Heretical Press**

**PO Box 1004, Hull, Yorkshire HU3 2YT, England**

At ten o'clock on the morning of Thursday 9 November 1944, one of the war's more bizarre chapters was about to unfold in a most unlikely location. A dartboard was still hanging on the wall of the mess room adjoining the barracks in Thatcham, near Newbury in Berkshire, where ten young black Americans were waiting with a mixture of apprehension and bewilderment for their court martial to begin. In the crowded, stuffy, makeshift courtroom they were about to face proceedings which could end with their executions. They listened quietly as the most serious of the charges, that of murder, was read to them. They were accused of killing three people, one of them the wife of a pub landlord, in an act of revenge which went dreadfully wrong.

The incident had begun exactly five weeks earlier to the day, and was all over in the space of about six hours. The men of the all-black 3247 Quartermaster Service Company had come from Devon on that Thursday, 5 October, to their new camp about a mile from Kingsclere, a village half-way between Newbury and Basingstoke in Britain's leafy south. They had arrived at their destination at about 4.30 in the afternoon, cleaned up their barracks and prepared their bunks. As was normal practice when they were on the move, each man had his weapon - a rifle or a carbine - and these were not taken away until about 10.45 that evening. After attending to their chores and eating, some of the men went into Kingsclere though no leave passes had been issued. They made their way to the Bolton Arms, one of several pubs in the village, where shortly after 7.00 p.m. they were approached by three or four American auxiliary military policemen. They were told that they had to return to camp because they had no passes and were improperly dressed. One soldier later claimed that an MP had cocked a rifle at him. An hour later they were on their way back to base in a truck and an earnest conversation began to develop about returning to get the MPs: 'We are going down there with our rifles,' said one GI, while another argued that they should take the rifles away from the MPs and then beat them up.

At around 9.30 p.m. rural England took on the appearance of the Old West as ten black soldiers walked back into the village, loading their weapons as they went. They looked for the MPs first in the Bolton Arms, and then in another pub, the Swan Inn, before going on the Crown Inn at about ten o'clock. Inside, in various rooms of the pub finishing off their drinks, were about eight or nine black GIs, probably also out without passes, a few locals and several MPs. One or two of the 'snowdrops' as the MPs were commonly called, left the pub and a single shot rang out, followed quickly by a volley of gunfire. In movie style everyone hit the floor. When the smoke had literally cleared one black GI lay dead in a pool of blood, shot in the head. The landlord's wife, Mrs Rose Napper, was lying in an inner room with a bullet wound in her jaw. She died in hospital in the early hours of the next morning. Outside, lying in a garden about 150 yards away, was the dead body of a black American MP, a bullet through his heart.

About forty people were packed into the cramped room as the court martial opened on that November morning. Apart from the defendants, the most interested spectators were the barrister representing the landlord of the Crown, and two senior officers from the Berkshire and Hampshire constabularies. As the day progressed the atmosphere grew more cloying and the air became thicker. Though smoking was not allowed while the trial was taking place everybody puffed away furiously during the short intervals. Two of the accused appeared to be asleep as 7.00 p.m. approached on the first day, one with his head in his hands.

The next morning was bright and sunny as the defence opened. That didn't take long for only one man elected to take the witness stand, while three of the others made short, unsworn statements. Ironically one of these said he wouldn't have been in the pub at all that evening if it hadn't been his birthday. It was thirty minutes before the military court reached its verdict and it was during this period that the gravity of it all seemed to hit some of the men, one of whom knelt and prayed with his Bible in his hand. Nine of the men were found guilty on all three counts - murder, riotous assembly and absence without leave - and despite having no previous convictions they were given life sentences with hard labour. The tenth man was found guilty of being AWOL. The trial had left as many questions as it provided answers. How and why had this hatred of MPs been generated in such a short time? Had the fact that at least one MP was black been of significance? Had the men's experience elsewhere in Britain led to this bitterness? Were any white officials reprimanded for sloppy weapons-storing procedures? The only known sequel to the affair was that a US colonel apologized to Harry Haig, the Regional Commissioner, for the company's behaviour, and the remainder of the men who had not been on trial were quickly dispatched overseas. (pp. 141-150)

## **Newbury Weekly News**

**October 12<sup>th</sup> 1944**

**Fusillade of Shots at Kingsclere Inn**

**Bullets Through Window of the "Crown"**

**Landlady and Two Coloured Soldiers Killed**

**Inquest on Mrs, Napper the Landlady**

### **Scene in the Bar: Hectic rush to take cover**

Much excitement was caused in the usually peaceful village of Kingsclere on Thursday night by a fusillade of shots – apparently from semi-automatic weapons – outside the Crown Inn. Inside the public bar of the inn consternation broke out when bullets came through the window, smashing the window frame and striking against the front wall. This was deepened when the landlady was seen to fall badly injured – it proved mortal – with a bullet through her jaw, a coloured soldier was shot and died, and afterwards it transpired that another coloured soldier – a military policeman it was said – had also died in a neighbouring front garden, from a bullet wound. The landlord was also cut on the wrist with broken glass, and others received slight injuries.

### **The Scene of the Shooting**

The Crown Inn has been kept by Mr. Frank Napper, an ex-huntsman, who has seen service with several packs, including the Old Berkeley West, Lord Poulett's, Lord Leconfield's and the Tedworth. He has been licensee of the Crown for eight or nine years and was assisted by his wife. It stands back from the Newbury road opposite the churchyard of the parish church and at the corner of North-street. It is a picturesque old-fashioned gabled inn, with a swinging signboard on the piece of grass in the front, and a portico door facing the Newbury-road. On the right of this is the public bar, through the window of which the bullets crashed. Above the door. The white wall of the façade is pitted with bullet marks. There are 15 of these to be seen on the walls and the window frames – in addition to others on Mr. Pearce's cottage and Mr. Garrett's house at the entrance to North street. At the other end of the inn there is a club room used by the Buffaloes. It has a large gable, the picturesque lines of which are rather spoilt by the extension which has been added at the apex. The gables give to the inn the appearance of an old-world building.

It was just before closing time that the incident started. The landlord and the landlady were collecting up the glasses; a couple of coloured soldiers were finishing a game of bar billiards; others in the bar were playing shove-halfpenny, including some of the "locals". The local people in the house at the time were Frank Butler, of the Council Houses, Kingsclere, Nelso Miles, of the Dell, and his brother Harry, and Fred Jewell, an old-time thatcher. There were also in the bar several coloured soldiers and coloured military policemen and more coloured soldiers in another room.

### **"Hell Let Loose"**

When the shooting broke out there was general confusion. One man present said it was like "hell let loose". Another likened it to a gangster scene on the films. The coloured soldier who was killed was said to have been sitting in a chair underneath the window which overlooks North-street and was just rising to his feet when the shooting started. He received a bullet in the neck. Another man threw himself bodily out of this window, taking all the glass with him. Everyone else dropped to the ground. Some threw themselves underneath the bar billiards table or took whatever cover there was available. It only lasted a very short time. Medical aid was sent for Mrs. Napper, who was aged 64. She was taken to Newbury Hospital in an ambulance, where she died in the early hours of the morning. The house is spoken of as being very well conducted. The Americans were never overcharged and Mrs. Napper is said to have been very kind and willing to do anything for them. Mr. and Mrs. Napper's two sons were telephoned for to come home. One who lives at Basingstoke arrived home soon after 11 o'clock on Thursday night. The other from London came the next morning. The Crown was closed all day Friday, being re-opened on Saturday night.

Sergt. Dudman and other local police, were immediately called to the inn and all those in the house at the time were required to stay behind for interrogation. Det.-Supt. R. Gill, from the Headquarters of the Hampshire Constabulary at Winchester, together with Supt. Liddiard of the Andover Division, to which Kingsclere is attached, who had also been informed of what had happened, motored over to Kingsclere and took charge of the enquiries. It was two o'clock on Friday morning before all those present at the inn had been questioned and statements taken. Meanwhile a search over a large area was immediately undertaken by the American military police and messages sent out for the detention of a number of American coloured soldiers who were supposed to have been outside the inn when the shooting took place. As a result of this it is understood that a number of coloured American soldiers have been detained. The number is stated to be 10 at present.

### **Found Dying in a Garden.**

Some of those present in the inn said that a coloured military policeman immediately ran out at the first shots and replied with his own "gun". It was said that he was shot when outside the inn. Certainly a little time afterwards he was found in a dying condition in the garden of Mr. Digweed, who lives in North-street, about a hundred yards from the

Crown. Mrs. Mothersell, Mr. Digweed's married daughter, was coming home with a girl friend, and heard a man groaning and calling "help" in her father's garden. She called her father and they went to him, but he died almost immediately. Some young women who were walking along Swan-street on their way to Overton, came running back saying there were shots being fired there. It may have been the shots which had been fired outside the Crown which they heard, for the whole thing happened so suddenly and caused such confusion and alarm that no one really knew what had happened.

#### **Procedure Likely to be Followed.**

The official procedure which will most likely be followed as the result of the affray will be as follows: First, a public inquest on the body of Mrs. Napper, with medical evidence to establish the cause of her death. This is necessary for the Coroner to grant his order for burial. The Coroner in this instance is Mr. S. V. Pinniger, the Borough Coroner for Newbury. As Mrs. Napper actually died in Newbury Hospital, the inquest comes within Mr. Pinniger's jurisdiction. Had she died at Kingsclere, the enquiry would have been held by the Coroner for that part of Hampshire, who is Col. E. T. P. Clarke, of Whitchurch. The inquest has already taken place, Mr Pinniger holding it at Newbury Police Court on Monday, and a full report of the proceedings will be found below. No inquest will be held on the bodies of the coloured American military policeman and the coloured soldier, nor will there be any proceedings before the Kingsclere Justices, as would have happened if civilians had been concerned in the proceedings. What is likely to happen is that a military Court of Enquiry will be held at once by the American military Authorities, which will be followed by an American Court Martial should charges be made.

#### **Statements by Those in Bar.**

Nelson Miles, of the Dell, Kingsclere, said he was in the Crown Inn, with his brother, Harry Miles, Frank Butler, of the Council Houses, and Fred Jewell, who lives at 10, Tower Hill, Kingsclere. They were in the public bar. He and Butler had just finished a game of shove-halfpenny and were having a little chat. He then sat down by his brother, when, without any warning, shots began to whiz through the windows of the bar. "I dashed for cover, first getting under the table, then under a seat. Shots seemed to keep on flying past. I then heard Mrs. Napper scream. I had seen her standing behind the bar. I lay still until all was quiet, and when I came from under cover I saw Mrs. Napper lying on the floor, bleeding profusely from a wound in the jaw. She was receiving attention from her husband".

Miles said he saw a sergeant with a wound in his face. Another soldier had been hit in the hand. Mr. Napper had been collecting up the glasses, and apparently splinters of broken glass entered his wrist. Miles said some of the shooting appeared to come from behind a tombstone in the cemetery across the square. As soon as the firing started everybody began running like hares. A loaded gun, which Miles described as an automatic carbine, was later found under a table in the public house.

Frank Butler, who threw himself on the floor, said it was "like hell let loose".

Fred Jewell said he was out at the back when he heard the shooting, and when he re-entered the public bar they were just picking Mrs. Napper up. Two coloured soldiers, who had been playing bar billiards, had taken shelter under the billiards table. It was all nice and quiet up to three minutes to ten, not a word being said out of place. There might have been a dozen in the inn at the time, and they heard nothing until the shots rang out. A doctor was called, and Mrs. Napper was taken in an ambulance to the hospital. "Then the police kept us there until 2 a.m. taking statements," added Jewell.

Jewell said he went along Swan-street to fetch Mrs. Liddell, and met two girls who were going to Overton, who had turned back because they said there was shooting in that street.

#### **INQUEST OPENED.**

The inquest on Mrs. Napper was opened at Newbury police court by the Borough Coroner, Mr. S. V. Pinniger, at mid-day on Monday.

After evidence of identification and medical evidence had been given, the Coroner said he would adjourn the proceedings *sine die* in accordance with an Emergency Powers Order, which directed that this should be done if a

Coroner was satisfied that a member of the American Forces had been charged or was under detention with a view to being charged, before a U. S. A. court with an offence involving responsibility for the death of a person other than a member of the American Forces.

Evidence of identification was given by Alexander Grove (53), a schoolmaster, of 90, Streathbourne-road, S.W.17. He stated that the deceased was his aunt and he last saw her alive about three weeks ago. He was informed of her death on Friday.

#### **Dr. T. G. Scott's Evidence.**

Dr. Thomas G. Scott said he attended Mrs. Napper at the Newbury and District Hospital on Thursday at about 11.15 p.m. She was suffering from a bullet wound in the neck. There was a small wound on the left side just below the angle of the jaw and a larger wound on the right side overlying the angle of the jaw, which was fractured. There was a deep cut two inches long extending from the right cheek into the upper lip. She was also badly shocked, owing to her injury. Mrs. Napper was unable to speak distinctly and could make no statement. When haemorrhage caused by the injury increased and eventually severely embarrassed respiration due to the swelling of the tongue, he opened the windpipe, which relieved breathing to some extent. Her condition, however deteriorated and she died at 4.55 a.m. on Friday.

On Sunday, continued Dr. Scott, he performed a post-mortem examination of the wound. The finger could be passed along the bullet track from one side of the neck to the other. This track went through the base of the tongue. The right mandible was extensively splintered. There was extensive haemorrhage into all the tissues of the neck and especially into the tongue and floor of the mouth. No bullet was found. Death was due to asphyxia caused by respiratory obstruction due to haemorrhage into the base of the tongue.

#### **Proceedings Adjourned Sine Die**

The Coroner said under the Emergency Powers Defence Burial, Inquest and Registration of Deaths Order, if, at an inquest concerning the death of a person other than a member of the American Forces, the Coroner was satisfied before the inquest was completed, that a member of the American Forces had been charged before a court of the U.S.A. with any offence involving responsibility for the death of the deceased person, or was being detained by any authority of the U.S.A. with a view to his being so charged, which, said Mr. Pinniger, he understood was so in this case, then, unless the Secretary of State otherwise directed, the Coroner should adjourn the inquest, and if a jury had been summoned, should discharge the duties of the jury and should furnish the Registrar of Deaths with a certificate stating the particulars necessary for registration of the death, so far as they had been ascertained at the inquest. Adding that he had got all the particulars necessary for the registration of the death, the Coroner concluded by stating he would accordingly adjourn the inquest *sine die*.

#### **THE FUNERAL**

Kingsclere Parish Church was filled with a large congregation for the funeral service to Mrs. Napper on Tuesday afternoon, at which the vicar, Rev. R. P. Rowan, officiated.

The hymns were: "The King of Love" and "The Day Thou Gavest" and Psalm 23 was read. Miss Every, who was at the organ, played Handel's Largo and Walford Davies' Solemn Melody as the congregation assembled and "O rest in the Lord" (Mendelssohn) at the conclusion of the service.

The family mourners were Mr. F. Napper (husband), Mr. A. S. Napper and Mr. R. F. Napper (sons), Mr W. Wood (brother), Mr Jim Redding and Mr. Bert Redding (nephews), Mrs Lizzie Wright (niece), Mr and Mrs. W. Napper, of Sheffield (brother-in-law and sister-in-law), Mrs. Leigh and Miss Darlow.

The congregation was representative of the whole village, and included several customers of the Crown Hotel. The U.S. Forces were represented by Colonel R. E. Phillips and Lieut. N. m. Hale, while Miss Charlene F. Wharton attended on behalf of the American Red Cross. Mr. F. A. H. Keates was present at the wish of Kingsclere and Whitchurch District Council, and Sergt. A. J. Dudman represented the Hants Constabulary.

Among a mass of wreaths was one from the American Red Cross.

## **Newbury Weekly News**

**October 26<sup>th</sup> 1944**

**(Transcript of local newspaper cutting)**

**The Fatal Shooting Incident at Kingsclere**

**General Eisenhower's Regret**

## **REPORT TO THE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

General Eisenhower's sorrow and regret has been expressed to the inhabitants of Kingsclere through the Rural District Council on Tuesday in regard to the recent shooting incident at Kingsclere, when there was a fusillade of shots at the Crown Inn and the landlady, Mrs. Napper, and two coloured American soldiers were killed.

The matter arose in a report from the Clerk (Mr. F. A. H. Keates), who stated that on October 5th, a regrettable and unfortunate incident occurred at Kingsclere when, apparently following a dispute between the American Military Police and coloured troops, a shooting incident took place outside the Crown Hotel, resulting in the death of the licensee's wife and two coloured American soldiers.

Following this incident, he had on Saturday morning, the 7th October, received a telephone communication from Col. Lumsden, a local resident, suggesting that a petition should be submitted to the appropriate authorities and that the Council should give this petition their official support. He had informed Colonel Lumsden he would report the matter to the General Purposes Committee for instructions.

Mr. Keates reported that the same afternoon he received a visit from the Second - in - Command to General Eisenhower and other United States officers in the United Kingdom, who stated that General Eisenhower had requested them to convey to the local authority and to the general inhabitants of Kingsclere his personal sorrow and regret and also of the whole United States Army Command that this most unfortunate and regrettable affair, resulting in the death of a local resident, should have occurred and have been caused by United States troops. He sincerely hoped that the effect of this occurrence would not tend to excite public opinion and to detract from the friendly good-feeling and spirit of co-operation which existed between our two English-speaking nations, which was so necessary and essential to the world now and in years to come. They also gave General Eisenhower's assurance that the fullest possible investigation would be made into the matter and appropriate action taken.

Arising from the report, it was resolved to recommend that the Council communicate with the United States authorities.

The report and recommendations were unanimously adopted upon the proposition of Lady Portal, the chairman of the committee.

## **Newbury Weekly News**

**November 16<sup>th</sup> 1944**

**The Kingsclere Shooting: Life Sentences on Nine Coloured Soldiers**

**United States Court Martial at Thatcham**

**Nine Men Found Guilty of Murder**

**The Tenth Gets Ten Years for Absence Without Leave**

### **Full report of the two days' proceedings**

The end of the trial came with dramatic suddenness at the second day's hearing on Friday. The whole of the previous day from 10 a.m. to nearly 7 p.m. was taken up with the opening of the case and the hearing of the evidence of the witnesses for the prosecution.

There was practically no evidence for the defence. A psychiatrist was called to prove one of the men was of the lowest category, and only one of the accused, Private Hildreth H. Fleming, elected to go into the witness' chair and make a statement on oath, which meant that he had to submit himself for cross-examination.

Three made short unsworn statements. One of these was Corpl. John W. Lilly, who said he would not have been in the town that night if it had not been his birthday and he was almost drunk.

Then the room was cleared and the ten accused filed, under armed guard into the adjoining mess-room whilst the court considered its verdict. It was a long wait and for the first time during the trial the accused seemed to show that they realised the seriousness of their position. One of them was seen to read a Bible and to kneel down for a short time and pray.

When the court was re-opened, it was made evident at once that the verdict was "guilty", by the President asking the Trial Judge Advocate if there were any previous convictions against them. He replied that they all had a clean record, and there was another short interval while the court considered the sentences.

When the Court was re-opened, the President, Lieut.-Colonel Leon H. Ashjian, at once sentenced each man separately. The nine who had been found guilty on three charges of murder, riotous assembly and absence without leave were each sentenced to dishonourable discharge from the Service and to imprisonment for their natural lives. Two of them held their heads in their hands and sobbed quietly when the sentence was pronounced.

A surprise followed when Senior Private Herbert Lawton was found not guilty on the charge of murder and not guilty on the charge of being concerned in the riotous assembly, but guilty of being absent without leave on the night of the occurrence from 9.30 to 10 – a half-an-hour. He was sentenced to dishonourable discharge and to 10 years' hard labour.

A sequel to the shooting up of the Crown Inn, Kingsclere, on the night of Thursday, October 5<sup>th</sup> last, by United States coloured soldiers, as a result of which Mrs. Rose Amelia Napper, the wife of the landlord, Mr. Frederick Napper, and two coloured soldiers lost their lives was an open Court Martial, which opened last Thursday, at Thatcham.

Ten coloured soldiers appeared before the Court charged with "deliberately killing with premeditation", with taking part in a riotous assembly of soldiers, and also of being absent from their quarters without leave.

### **The Charges.**

The names of the accused men were Privates Ernest Burn, Willie J. Crawford, Hildreth H. Fleming, sen., Herbert Lawton, Herbert Moultrie, Percy D. Oree; Privates 1<sup>st</sup> Class James L. Agnew, John E. Lockett, Willie Washington; and Corpl. John W. Lilly, who in the words of the charge "acting jointly and in pursuance of a common intent did at Kingsclere, Hampshire, England on or about the 5<sup>th</sup> of October, 1944, with malice aforethought, wilfully, deliberately, feloniously, unlawfully, and with premeditation kill one Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Jacob J. Anderson, a human being, by shooting him with a carbine. There was a second "specification" of killing one Private Joseph W. Coates, a human being, by shooting him with a carbine; and a third "specification" of killing one Rose Amelia Napper, a human being, by shooting her with a carbine.

Another charge against the same accused men was "acting jointly and in pursuance of a common intent at Kingsclere, Hampshire, England, on or about October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1944, commonly and wrongfully engaging in and taking part in a disorderly and riotous assembly of soldiers. The same defendants were also charged with being absent without leave.

The Court consisted of the Presiding Officer, Lieut.-Colonel Leon H. Ashjian and seven other members one of whom was termed the "Law Member" (Captain William Parks). He sat next to the President, decided upon objections whether evidence could be admitted or not, and did a lot of interrogation after the witnesses had been examined by the prosecuting Officer, and the Officer who appeared to defend.

The Officer briefed for the prosecution was Lieut. Myron L. Borowiak, who was termed Trial Judge Advocate. He was assisted by Lieut. Stuart N. Arkin and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. R. N. Hunt.

Lieut. Richard Dudley appeared for the defence assisted by Lieut. Sheridan Horowitz.

### **Set-Up of the Court**

The set-up of the Court was in a long room adjoining a mess room, a prominent feature of which was a dart board hanging on the wall. The Presiding Officer and those who formed the court were seated at the table occupying nearly the whole length of the room. In front of them at one end were the accused persons seated in three rows. At a table by their side were the Officers entrusted with their defence. Then came the shorthand writer, the witness stand, or rather seat, as witnesses gave their evidence seated. The prosecuting Officers were at another table, behind which the press were accommodated. Altogether in Court, including the accused, there must have been 40 people and amongst these were Mr. G. H. Crispin, barrister-in-law, who watched the proceedings on behalf of Mr Frederick Napper, and Supt. Crombie, from the Headquarters Berkshire Constabulary.

The Court was timed to assemble at 10 o'clock, but it was half-past eleven before the Trial Judge Advocate commenced his short speech for the prosecution. The intervening time was occupied with the preliminaries of swearing in the Court and the reading to each of the accused the very long charges. After the Court had been sworn in, each member was asked if he had any conscientious scruples against the infliction of capital punishment and each replied in the negative. Then each of the accused was asked if he wished to challenge any member of the Court. In each case as the accused was named personally, his counsel replied "He does not".

With a break for luncheon and a five minutes interval at the end of the afternoon, the Court sat until just before seven o'clock, when the case for the prosecution had been concluded. The Court then adjourned until half-past nine on Friday.

Towards the end of the first day's proceedings you could almost cut the atmosphere of the not very large room with a knife. Every window was shut and although there was no smoking when the Court was actually sitting, at the least interval everybody smoked furiously. The room got hotter and hotter and the air thicker and thicker. It was a job to keep alert. Two of the accused men went to sleep, one with his head in his hands. The others sat stolidly and did not visibly seem much concerned with their perilous predicament, for the sentence for the alleged offence – if found guilty – was either death or imprisonment for their natural lives. The Court was charged with drama, but the prisoners themselves seemed the least concerned.

### **Case for Prosecution Opened**

Lieut. Borowisk, in his opening statement, said it was the intention of the prosecution in this case to prove that on the night in question, October 5<sup>th</sup>, the ten accused men left their camp without permission, being absent without leave. They went to the village of Kingsclere visited various, "pubs". Kingsclere was patrolled by auxiliary military police, who noted that the coloured soldiers were not in their proper uniform and also discovered that they had no passes. They told the accused they would have to return to their proper unit. The accused finally left the village and on their way back they joined in a discussion and decided they would "take care" of the military police. On the return to camp, nine of the accused each got a rifle and ammunition and were joined by the tenth accused, who had not been in Kingsclere. They then returned looking for the military police.. They entered one "pub", didn't find them. They finally gathered in front of one "pub" the Crown Inn – and two military policemen walked out. When they walked out a shot was fired. A volley of shots followed, and as a result of the firing one of the military policemen and another soldier, who was in the "pub", and also the wife of the publican were killed. That briefly is what the prosecution would attempt to prove.

### **Evidence for the Prosecution.**

The first witness for the prosecution was Capt. H. Williams, Commanding Officer, on October 5<sup>th</sup> of the 3247 Quartermasters' Service Co. Identifying all the accused as members of his company, he said on October 5<sup>th</sup>, the night in question, no passes out of camp were issued to his knowledge.

Pte. Coleman Binns, also of the 3247 Quartermaster's Service Co., said on the night of October 5<sup>th</sup> about 7.30 to 8. O'clock, he left camp with Pte. Agnew and visited a public house where they saw Ptes. Lockett and Lawton. During the ten or fifteen minutes they remained there, Fleming, Moultrie and Lilly, and three others, whose names he could not remember, came in. While they were all together, three or four military policemen came into the public house and told them they were not in right and proper uniform, all of them being dressed in field jackets. The eight men were ordered

back to camp, and “picking up” a truck were later joined by Ptes. Burns and Oree. Talking together on the way , Fleming said they should get their guns and go back to the town, and there was general agreement that they should return. On arrival back at camp, Binns suspected trouble and told the sergeant, he himself was going to bed.

Miss Doris L. Reardon, a canteen assistant, of 12, Andrew-street, Poplar, said at approximately 7 p.m. on October 8<sup>th</sup> she was in the Bolton Arms, Kingsclere, when a group of coloured soldiers came in, followed shortly afterwards by some military policemen, who told the soldiers they were not allowed in town and were not properly dressed. One soldier who was drinking, asked if he could finish and then between 8 and 8.15 they all left. She was unable to identify any of the coloured soldiers.

Pte. F. C. Julius A. Walto, of the 3247 Quartermaster’s Service Co., said about nine o’clock on the evening of October 5<sup>th</sup>, he went to the room assigned to him, intending to light a fire. He saw Ptes, Fleming and Burns talking quietly together and saw Burns put something into Flemings hand and he heard a rattling noise. He made two journeys downstairs for coal and when he returned to the room the second time they had gone.

James Wellman, of 56, Swan-street, Kingsclere was in the Bolton Arms on the evening in question, arriving about eight or nine minutes to nine. As he left about about nine or ten minutes to ten, he said he met a coloured soldier in the passage, who spoke to the landlord and rushed out as Mr Wellman was going out. Two more coloured men were standing about just as he went out, and he counted two more groups of four men each and another one. They had something in their arms which looked like firearms and were wearing field jackets.

### **Reason Why Men Had Rifles and Ammunition.**

Capt. Williams (re-called) said that on October 5<sup>th</sup> the men were located in Devonshire. Early that morning they were moved by rail, arriving at their destination about 4.30 in the afternoon. Whenever the men were moved, it was necessary for them to have their arms and each man was issued either with a carbine or rifle. Arriving at their destination, the men had to clean up barracks, be assigned their rooms and bring in their cots. The men then were still in possession of their weapons. The weapons were not taken away from them until approximately 10.45 that evening. At that time, a check was made of the men present in the barracks. To the best of witness’s recollection, Agnew, Fleming, Lockett and Crawford were missing.

At that time was a check made of the arms? – Yes, we picked up a carbine or rifle from each man who was present.

Did you find the arms at that time of the four men who were absent? – There was a weapon by Crawfords bed, although Crawford was missing.

What about Agnew, Lockett and Fleming? – These three men were missing and their arms were also missing.

Did you subsequently turn over the arms to anybody?- Yes, on October 6<sup>th</sup>, I turned over all the arms of the accused, with the exception of Fleming’s and Lawton’s to C.I.D Agent O’Connor. I took Agnew’s carbine from him at approximately two o’clock in the morning when he was caught trying to get in.

Cross-examined by Lieut Dudley for the defence:-

Capt. Williams, did you personally pick up these rifles? – I didn’t personally pick up all of them, but I was present when most of them were picked up and was in the arms’ room where they were being locked up afterwards.

Did you personally see that Agnew’s, Fleming’s and Lockett’s rifles were missing? – I know the men were not present and their rifles were not there when we checked them.

Further questioned, witness said it was Lawton’s carbine that was missing, not Lockett’s.

Whose weapon was found on Crawford’s bed? – We didn’t check it at that time; I couldn’t say.

Do you know whether a rifle was picked up from Lockett’s bed? – One was.

Whose rifle was that? – We didn’t check it at that time. I didn’t know then there would be a serious incident or I should have checked it.

### **Could Not Recognise the Men.**

Corpl. Copeland said that he was at the Swan Inn that evening. About 9.45 five coloured soldiers came in and one asked where were the Military Police. Witness said he did not know and the men left. He didn't notice if they were bearing arms. In the hall there were also two or three soldiers, which made about eight in all. Witness was asked if he would stand up and say if he could recognise amongst the accused any of the soldiers who had come to the Swan. Copeland looked at the men carefully and said he could not identify any of them. About 15 minutes after he left the Swan he heard some shooting. Questioned as to the distance from the Swan to the Crown, witness said it was just over a block. (A block is about an eighth of a mile).

#### **SCENE IN "THE CROWN".**

##### **"We All Hit the Floor".**

Corpl. Fred Washington said he went to the Falcon, where he had a few drinks and then went to the Crown at about 10 minutes to 10.

When you were in the Crown did you see anybody enter? – No.

Did anything happen while you were there? – I heard a shot outside. Someone said "that sounds like a shot", so we all hit the floor.

Had anybody walked out of the "pub"? – Yes.

Who had walked out of the "pub" prior to the first shot being fired? – Jack Anderson, a military policeman.

After the shot was fired, what did you do? – I hit the floor the same as the rest of those present.

Did you see or hear if any of the military policemen fired any of the shots? – Not to my knowledge.

Were you able to identify the man you saw arrested? – Yes.

Look over there and point him out – Witness pointed to the accused, Lockett.

Cross-examined by Lieut. Dudley: - How long after Jack Anderson went out did you hear the shots? – Immediately after he went outside.

In answer to further questions, witness said there was about eight or nine coloured soldiers in the bar at the time.

In answer to the Law Member of the Court, witness said he saw that the publican's wife had been shot and also a soldier who was sitting across the room at a table.

You say you heard a shot fired and you hit the floor? Was that before the volley was fired? – Yes.

What was the reason for your hitting the floor when only one shot was fired? I did like everyone else.

One shot was fired and everyone hit the floor? – Yes.

#### **The Landlords Evidence**

Frederick Napper, the landlord of the Crown Inn, was the next witness, and said just before 10 o'clock everything was quiet, when all of a sudden there was a loud burst of gunfire. My wife, who was standing by the side of me, was shot.

Did you notice who was in the house at the time? – There were four or five locals and I believe there were two military police and other soldiers in another room.

Where were the military police prior to the shots being fired? – They had rushed in.

Witness said several shots were fired. His wife was by his side. He got down on the floor and tried to get her down. Then he found that she had been shot. His wife was attended to and afterwards taken into Newbury Hospital, where she died as a result of the shot. He saw her in the hospital about twelve o'clock. She was then just alive and that was all.

Do you know where the shots came from? – From the outside.

### **Medical Evidence**

Capt. Walter Sewell, a licensed physician with the detachment, said he was called to the bar at the Crown, where he saw a coloured soldier lying on his back with a pool of blood about his head. He was dead. He went into the inner room where he found the wife of the proprietor with a bullet wound in her lower jaw. She was being attended by a civilian doctor. He also saw the military policemen in a garden about 150 yards down North-street. He was dead. The first soldier, Coates, had a bullet wound in the region of the temple. The bullet had penetrated and fractured his skull, lacerating the brain. Anderson had been shot in the breast bone. The bullet had penetrated the large artery coming from the heart. The bodies of the two men were removed to the mortuary of the 98<sup>th</sup> General Hospital. Mrs. Napper was taken to Newbury Hospital in a command car.

Major Lev, of the medical Corps of the 98<sup>th</sup> General Hospital, said that Coates' death was due to laceration of the brain caused by a "fast moving penetrating missile". In Anderson's case the bullet had gone through the right lung and penetrated the pulmonary artery. He was suffocated with his own blood, which was the cause of death.

Dr. Thomas Gilbert Scott, of Wattlefield, Speen, who attended Mrs. Napper in Newbury Hospital, said her respiration became very embarrassed because the haemorrhage increased. About 2 a.m., he performed tracheotomy, which relieved her somewhat for a time, but she died at 4.55 a.m. Death was due to asphyxia caused by respiratory obstruction from haemorrhage into the base of the tongue.

Lieut. William R. Harper, the Provost Officer for the day, said that instructions were given that men allowed in Kingsclere should be wearing Class A uniforms.

Lieut. Dudley cross-examined witness to show that some of the men of the company were not issued with Class A uniforms.

Sergt. James M. Clarke was called to prove that each of the accused men were issued with carbines.

### **Local P.C. Gives Evidence**

P.C. Amess of the Hants Joint Constabulary, stationed at Baughurst, deposed that in the churchyard opposite the Crown Inn, he found a magazine of a carbine charged with 15 rounds. He also spoke of finding a spent bullet in the ladies' toilet at the hotel. He discovered 12 bullet holes: four through the inn windows in the front of the house: four or five over the hotel entrance, and two through the window in the bar.

Detective Sergeant Whitehead, of the Hants Constabulary, stationed at Andover, said he was called to the scene of the shooting and arrived at the Crown Inn about 11 p.m. on the night of October 5<sup>th</sup>. He went into the bar, turned to the right and under a seat saw a rifle. It had a piece of adhesive tape on the stock with the name Lawton upon it. Witness extracted one live round from the breech and four from the clip. Outside the premises of the inn he found nine 30 calibre expended cartridge cases in the corner of the doorway. He also found 13 in the roadway. Altogether he discovered 33 expended shell cases. In the smoking room he found the dead body of an American coloured soldier. In the blind above where he was sitting was a bullet hole. Witness also gave evidence of taking 12 rifles to Mr. Henry J. Walls, a ballistic expert at the Metropolitan Police Laboratory at Hendon.

Mr. Henry James Walls, the ballistic expert alluded to, said he had been able to establish by tests that of the 33 expended cases 15 had been fired from the carbine belonging to the accused man Washington, six from Agnew's and seven from Lawton's. Of the remaining five he could not trace them to any specific carbine, but they could have been fired from carbines issued to Lockett, Moultrie or Oree. None of the 33 cases had been fired from the carbines issued to Burns, Crawford, Fleming or Lilly.

Cross-examined, witness said there was no evidence to show that the three rifles had been fired since they were last cleaned. Witness said he did not examine the rifles for finger prints, as this was not within his province.

Next, four American C.I.D Agents named Arbiter, Boosa, Frank J. O'Connor and T. A. Mantalos gave evidence of taking statements from each of the accused men.

### **Objection to Statement Taken By Detectives.**

Lieut Dudley for the defence objected to the statements being put in, but was over-ruled by the Law Member of the Court.

Lieut. Dudley next objected to the names of other accused persons being mentioned in the various statements, in addition to the accused who made and signed the statement.

The Law Member upheld this objection, the names being deleted before the statements were handed in.

Some of the points in the statements, which were very long, were as follows:-

Herbert Lawton said he had been advised that a carbine said to be his was found in the Crown Hotel after the shooting. He was not there himself and he had no explanation as to how his rifle came to be there.

Percy Oree, in his statement said that when the M.P.s told them to go home early in the evening one of them (the M.P.s) cocked his rifle at him. When they were in the truck X said "we are going down there with our rifles and everybody agreed". One said "has everybody got ammunition". Oree went on to say that when they returned to Kingsclere he went into a "pub" and asked the publican where the M.P.s were. The landlord said they had left about ten minutes earlier. They went on to outside the Crown. Two M.P.s came out. A shot was fired and witness said he at once ran into the Cemetery. He added "I have not fired my rifle off since I left the States".

Hilrith Fleming, in his statement, said at the camp they got their rifles and ammunition. He added "I had 15 rounds in my clip".

Willie Crawford said the men said they were going to get "the (*word is unclear in the clipping*) M.P. who made so much trouble". At the Crown, he said after the M.P.s came out of the door a shot was fired then others. He saw one M.P. leaning against a building holding his stomach.

James L. Agnew said "We all agreed we would go back and take the rifles away from the M.P.s and beat them up".

Herbert Moultrie (in his statement); "Who fired the first round I don't know. I aimed my gun over the top of the "pub" and then fired".

Ernest Burns: "Before we arrived back in Kingsclere we all arranged to load our guns. I put five rounds in my gun. I thought we were going to talk to the M.P.s but they started shooting. I ran straight back to the camp.

John Lilly said on the way back to the camp they were all very angry because the M.P.s had run them (*words unclear in clipping*) and out. They took their rifles and the ammunition and walked back to the town. They loaded their rifles on the way to the town.

John E. Lockett said someone suggested they should go back to the town and take care of the M.P.s. At the Crown, when the shots were fired, "I went down on the ground to stop getting hit and dropped my rifle".

At this point, "Trial Judge Advocate Browiak made the announcement: "The prosecution rests". Which is the American equivalent for the prosecution is concluded.

The Court then rose.

### **FRIDAY'S PROCEEDINGS.**

#### **Only One Accused Gives Evidence on Oath.**

The case for the prosecution being completed on Thursday, the case for the defence opened on Friday morning when the Court re-assembled in the sunlit room.

In a preliminary statements, it was asserted for the defence that in law, to be guilty of murder, a man must have “aided, abetted, assisted or encouraged the killing”, and must be “so situated to render some aid to him who directly perpetrates the homicidal act”. Tacit agreement to, or secret knowledge of, a crime was not sufficient to convict a man of guilt. It was further suggested that persons might be guilty in different degrees of the same homicide. When a sudden popular movement was got up to redress a supposed grievance, because of the temper of the party, any killing would only amount to manslaughter.

The first witness called was Corpl. G. Straeter, who said on the night of October 5<sup>th</sup>, Capt. Williams got him out of bed to pick up the rifles from the men. In the room in which Lawton slept with seven other men, he picked up seven weapons, the eighth belonging to a man who was on guard. Lawton was asleep and a rifle was hanging beside his bed, although he was unable to identify it as belonging to Lawton.

At this point the ten accused were told there were three courses open to them. They could take the stand like any other witness and make a statement on oath, in which case they would be submitted to cross-examination, they could make an unsworn statement, or remain silent. If they chose to say nothing, it would not be taken as an admission of guilt and would not be counted against them by the Court.

Of the ten, only Pte. Willie Crawford chose to make a statement. On oath, he said, after they had been assigned to their rooms on the afternoon of October 5<sup>th</sup> and had eaten, “some of the boys” started to walk into town. He joined them; not knowing what was going to happen, but learnt that they wanted to have a talk with the M.P.s. They were picked up by a truck and in Kingsclere they went into a “pub”, had a few drinks and came out. At the next “pub” he went in to see if the M.P.s were there, because he had no rifle, but was unable to find them. At the third “pub”, he went in and was told the M.P.s were on the other side of the door. The “boys” were waiting outside and he saw the two M.P.s, one with a carbine and the other with a flashlight. There were shots and the M.P dropped his flashlight, cried out and clutched his stomach. He himself was in the line of fire and dropped down on to the ground. As soon as it was quiet he got up and ran, and got back without seeing the other men.

#### **“Let Me Kill Him”.**

Cross-examined by the prosecuting counsel, Crawford said he had no pass into the town that night. He knew the other men had been ordered to return to camp. He said he did not know they had ammunition when they set out, but pressed, admitted he heard someone ask if they all had ammunition and the reply “yes” from everybody. He overheard Burns say “let’s kill the M.P.”, and a voice answered “no, let me kill him”.

Lieut. Arkin; Who was that man? – Crawford; I can’t remember. I was going by the voices of the men because it was dark.

Lieut. Arkin: Whose voice was it? – Crawford: “Agnew’s”.

In answer to further questions, Crawford said he thought the boys were talking and did not think there would be any serious trouble. They only wanted to speak to the M.Ps.

Lieut. Arkin: And that is why they carried rifles and ammunition.

Further cross-examined: Witness said that when he came out of the Crown he heard the M.P.s say “Disband Arms”. He only saw one with a rifle and he was taking it off his shoulder. He could not describe how the men were grouped nor how far apart the rifle flashes were.

Captain V. H. Rosen, an Army psychiatrist, was the next witness for the defence. It was shown in documentary evidence that Washington (one of the accused), after a mental test, had been graded in the fifth category, the lowest accepted for military service, and had made a total score of 42. Capt. Rosen said it was usual if a man made a score as low as 42 to submit him to a further test. The low score might be due to a number of causes – the man might not be trying or might be mentally deficient, and it was impossible to say why Washington had been graded so low. The system was fairly rough to give the key to a man’s ability to judge between right and wrong.

#### **Prosecution Sums Up.**

In a short speech, the evidence for the prosecution was summed up. Counsel said by their own admission and the evidence of Capt. Williams, the men were guilty of being absent without leave. The third charge of unlawful assembly was also undefended, for the men, with the exception of Crawford, said themselves they had collected their weapons

and gone into town looking for the M.P.s. That constituted unlawful assembly and was likely to bring discredit to the military service. Murder then was the principal charge of the three. Medical evidence showed that Anderson, Coates and Mrs. Napper all died as a result of bullet wounds. Mrs. Napper was standing beside her husband when she received the shot which caused her death. She had not ordered them out of her "pub". After they had been ordered out of town because they were improperly dressed and without passes, they went back to camp over a mile away, got their carbines (and everyone knew the others were armed) and made sure they had ammunition. You do not take a loaded carbine with ammunition to have a talk with men. One of the accused said "I am going to kill that M.P.", and another replied "no, let me kill him". They knew the temper of each other, and they knew a killing was liable to result. The fact that Mrs. Napper and Coates were not intended to be killed did not relieve any of them of the guilt of murder. Those who aided and abetted were just as guilty, because the U.S. military code did not differentiate between an accessory after the act, and the principal. The evidence had clearly shown that there was an intent by the members of the group to commit murder and the group as a whole joined in.

### **The Defence Replies.**

In reply, counsel for the defence said there were degrees of culpability and others follow up actions of the leaders. Crawford had no weapon and did not set out without intent to kill but as part of a group.

Evidence had shown that Lawton's carbine was found at the Crown Hotel and that shots had been fired from it. Lawton, however, denied being present when the firing took place, and a carbine was picked up from his bunk on the night of Oct. 5<sup>th</sup>. Lockett admitted firing certain rounds from his carbine and leaving it in the "pub", and the defence suggested that Lockett had in fact been firing Lawton's carbine. Expert evidence showed that the carbines belonging to Lilly and Oree had not been fired. The defence believed that at least one member was not present when the incident took place.

In conclusion, it was said for the prosecution that as a result of the action of these men three people were dead, and clemency did not fall within the discretion of the Court but was the function of the reviewing authority. The men could either be hung or given life imprisonment, and the prosecution did not think that the Court could exercise any showing of clemency or mitigation, but that the proper punishment should be meted out as a deterrent to others.

The Court was cleared and when re-called about half-an-hour later, the accused men's Army records were read out, there being no evidence of any previous crime against them. They were asked again if they wished to say anything, and Fleming, Moultrie, Burns, Lockett and Lilly made unsworn statements, saying there was no intention on the part of any one of them to kill. Lockett and Lilly both said they had been drinking, and the latter said it was his birthday and he would not have been one of the party if he had not been half drunk.

### **The Men Sentenced.**

After a short adjournment, the Court resumed and each of the accused men stood before the eight officers who had tried them, while sentence was read out. Nine of the ten men, Agnew, Burns, Crawford, Fleming, Lilly, Lockett, Moultrie, Oree and Washington were found guilty on all three charges, and sentenced to be dishonourably discharged from the military service of the U.S. and to forfeit all pay and allowances, and to be confined with hard labour for the term of their natural lives. Lawton was acquitted on the charge of murder and riotous assembly but convicted of being absent without leave for half-an-hour, and was sentenced to be dishonourably discharged from the Army and be imprisoned with hard labour for ten years.

## **Newbury Weekly News**

**December 14<sup>th</sup> 1995**

**Hushed up by the allies, the forgotten massacre**

For the Hampshire village of Kingsclere, the bloodiest moment of the Second World War came close to the end, and it was not the enemy but American troops who brought carnage to the blacked-out wartime streets.

It was just before closing time on October 5, 1944, when 10 black American soldiers started pouring bullets into the Crown pub, killing two black military policemen and the Landlady Mrs Rose Napper.

Hushed up by the allies at the time, the night's bloodshed has become Kingsclere's forgotten massacre.

The 10 soldiers had arrived at the American base at Sydmonton Court that morning and had gone out drinking in the village, but were sent back by MPs because they were not wearing their best uniforms.

They did go back, but instead of changing, some reports say the soldiers had not been issued with Class A uniforms, they picked-up their rifles and ammunition and set off back to Kingsclere to get their revenge.

Jack and Winifred Smith, sitting in the same front room of their George Street house they were in when the firing started that autumn night 51 years ago, remember the shootings as if they were yesterday.

"We were sitting here and we heard shots being fired, and I said to the wife "That sounds like a German plane firing", and she said "No, I expect it is the Home Guard having a practice", Mr Smith said. They were both wrong. The American soldiers had opened fire from the churchyard, no more than 30 yards from the Smiths' window.

"I went to the door and a coloured American policeman came up." Mr Smith recalls. "He said "If I were you I would get indoors and go upstairs because there is shooting going on out here".

It may have been Private Jacob Anderson, a black MP, who was later found dead in a nearby garden.

Eye witnesses recalled an MP running from the pub and firing at the attackers, and as the shooting from the churchyard ended, Mr Smith remembers the soldiers being chased, by one or more MPs down North Street.

"They ran down North Street ... and they shot one of the policemen in somebody's back garden", Mr Smith said.

That somebody was Fred Digweed, whose daughter, Vivien, now Mrs Vivien Lilley, and living in Basingstoke, remembers the evening as vividly as the Smiths.

She had just got home from going to Newbury with two girlfriends when the shooting started.

"I heard someone calling for help but I didn't take much notice, and I saw a light on the garden path but I thought it was a glow worm", she recalls.

The calls for help got louder, and the then 19-year-old Mrs Lilley went into the garden where she found fatally wounded Private Anderson lying among her father's runner beans.

Anderson had been shot in the chest and the bullet had pierced an artery close to his heart and punctured a lung. Mr Digweed was a St. John's Ambulance volunteer but, despite giving Anderson first aid, the soldier died among the runner beans.

The first soldier, Private Joseph Coates, never got out of the Crown. He had been shot dead in the opening salvo.

Sixty-four-year-old Mrs Napper was shot in the neck and jaw as the bullets sprayed into the pub.

One witness to that autumn night in 1944, Mr Nelson Miles, from the Dell, told an NWN reporter at the time that he had just sat down with his brother when shots began to whizz through the windows of the bar.

"I dashed for cover, first getting under the table, then under a seat. Shots seemed to keep flying past. I then heard Mrs Napper scream ... when I came from cover I saw Mrs Napper lying on the floor, bleeding profusely from a wound in the jaw. She was receiving attention from her husband", he said.

Mrs Napper, who had been standing beside her husband when she was shot, was taken to Newbury Hospital where she died in the early hours of the following morning.

## The Kingsclere Murders - 1944

Back at the Smiths' house, Mr Smith, who was the village milkman, was fetching milk to make tea for all the people who came out to see what had happened when the shooting stopped.

They found the pub, and surrounding buildings, peppered by shots.

"They must have been shooting quite wildly, the white house next to the pub was riddled with bullet holes" Mr Smith said.

Several other soldiers and locals had been slightly injured, including Mrs Napper's husband, who had a cut wrist. In all, 33 empty bullet cases were found by police as they combed the area the next morning.

The 10 soldiers accused of the murders were court martialled by the US Army in Thatcham the following month.

Nine of the 10 men were found guilty of murder, riotous assembly and being absent without leave.

Each was dishonourably discharged from the army and sentenced to hard labour for the rest of their lives.

The tenth soldier, Private Herbert Lawton, was acquitted of murder and riotous assembly, but convicted of being absent, and was discharged from the army and sentenced to 10 years hard labour.

The 10 men went back to the United States to serve their sentences and nothing is known of what became of them, or exactly what drove them to act the way they did that night.

In Kingsclere, The Crown is boarded up, after a fire earlier this year, and only a handful of people who remember the night's bloodshed are still alive.

The shootings are forgotten. There is nothing to mark the violence that suddenly erupted among the still of the Hampshire Downs, and the only memorial, in the cemetery overlooking the village, is Mrs Napper's grave: "In loving remembrance of Rose Amelia Napper. Sweetest memories".