

From the Otago Daily Times, 11<sup>th</sup> September, 1917

## **HOTEL LICENSEE'S DIFFICULTIES**

### **MINERS TAKE POSSESSION**

*“At the Queenstown police Court on Saturday, before Mr G.Cruickshank, SM, James Christie Knowles, licensee of the Glenorchy Hotel, Lake Wakatipu, was charged with having his premises open on Sunday, September 5. He was also charged with “treating”. Defendant pleaded “ Guilty” to both charges.*

*Inspector Fouhy said that the statements of witnesses, as obtained by Constable Rowe, disclosed a bad state of affairs. A number of miners from Paradise paid their monthly visit to the hotel with their cheques. The hotel door never closed from Saturday night until well into Sunday morning, and even on Sunday afternoon drink was exposed for sale and was sold. A number of drunken men were seen leaving the premises. Games of “forty fives” were played in the premises and treating was also permitted. The only thing he (the Inspector) could say in favour of the licensee was that he was a statutory first offender, and during the last five years no complaints had been made against his hotel.*

*Mr Wesley Turton, for the defence, pleaded for leniency, stating that when a number of miners came to a hotel at a place like Glenorchy they usually took charge of the place, as there were no police at hand. Mr Knowles had had his hotel in the market for sale for the past six months. He (Mr Turton) asked his Worship not to endorse the license.*

*His Worship said he looked upon both cases as serious, but, considering what Mr Turton had said, that there had been no endorsement, nor any complaint against the house for the past five years; also, that, no doubt the licensee had a good deal to contend with by miners coming from a distance, he would not endorse the license. But on the charge of keeping open on Sunday defendant would be fined 10 pound, the maximum penalty, and for the breach of the War Regulations (permitting treating) he would be fined 20 pound with costs in each case. Alternative informations were withdrawn by the police.”*

This case was widely reported in the newspapers of New Zealand. Certainly the police knew when to come and what they would find as the two constables rowed all the way from Queenstown.

The card game forty fives is a card game which has Irish origins and was particularly popular on the West Coast. I seem to recall Neil Gollop talking about it.

James Knowles would have been quite fearful of running afoul of the War Regulations. The Temperance movement had existed in New Zealand since the early 1880s, in parallel with that in other western countries. Growing in strength, in 1911 they forced a referendum for the abolition of liquor. They needed 60% of the vote but only got 55.8% - a close run thing. Another referendum was held in December, 1914, where the vote fell to 49%. At the outbreak of the war and during the war, War Regulations were introduced, all 249 pages of them. Reading them it becomes apparent the New Zealand saw itself as a group of islands off the coast of Norfolk which the Kaiser had firmly in his sights. The fact that New Zealand was on the other side of the world, several weeks sailing away, was irrelevant. We were part of

Britain, and probably more specifically England. Coupled with that, those drawing up the regulations were clearly in the Temperance camp as well as suffering from a degree of paranoia. While they were at it, regulations were drawn up outlawing brothels and prostitution. The United States response to the 9/11 attack was positively lethargic in comparison. James Knowles was in danger of losing his asset as well as his livelihood. He probably willingly paid his fine and bought his lawyer, Mr Turton, lunch. He might have bought him a drink too but that was illegal.

It is not that clear what the “treating” really referred to. The regulations say the buying of another person a drink but I suspect it really referred to drinking in “schools”. This is the practice of a group of drinkers paying for a round in turn with the down side that the fastest drinker sets the pace.

The miners were mining scheelite at the northern end of Mt Alfred and were camped there. The workings are still obvious.

Vince