

# **Sidney Harold Wickens Tribunal Reports**

## ***Military Service Tribunals- Transcriptions of Newspaper Reports***

### **The Bexhill Chronicle**

**From Bexhill Chronicle 24th June 1916 (DSCF2057) – Appeal Tribunal**

#### **A Grocer's Difficulties**

Mr Wickens (Messers Wickens & Sons, of Devonshire and Sackville roads) appealed against the decision of the Local Tribunal in regard to Mr J. W. D. Burgess and Mr C. B. Blundell, who were in his employ.

Mr Harold Glenister supported the appeal in regard to both appellants – Mr Wickens stated that his business was the largest in Bexhill, as he did a wholesale trade. Mr Burgess had been with him for sixteen years. – Mr Glenister said that he did not contend that the two men were in a certified occupation. – Mr Wickens, in reply to Mr Glenister, added that he personally took considerable part in the business. He had lost eleven men already. There had been a tremendous rush in the grocery trade, and they were very busy. To cope with that trade, the services of Mr Burgess were absolutely necessary. He had been passed for sedentary work at home, but he would be of far more use at Bexhill, where he was doing good work. Mr Blundell was the only man now in his employ who could do heavy work.

Mr Burgess was in the provision Department; Mr Blundell in the grocery. – In reply to Major Grantham, Mr Wickens said he had already women assistants and boys, but they could not do the heavy work. At one shop he had four women. He had advertised in the Bexhill papers for men of non-military age, but could not get them. He offered good wages, but could not get men suited for the heavy work that had to be done. He personally helped in the heavy work during the season as occasion required. There was also an appeal from the equitable friendly society (Tunbridge Wells) on behalf of Mr Burt Burgess, on behalf of Mr Burgess, their representative in Bexhill, but beyond the written statement placed before the tribunal no evidence was given in support of it – The Tribunal granted Mr Burgess six months exemption; in regard to Mr Blundell the decision of the Local Tribunal was confirmed

In reply to major Grantham – His wife had been in the business with two years. She was in business before he married her, with four or five years experience. He was quite ready to help in any way he could; the only thing was that he had a certificate that his wife was unable to take charge of the business. He had five young ladies in the business. Six men have joined up. He had one man who was unfit. He bought the business before he was naturalised, three years next September.

By Mr Morgan – He did not think he could do the work in the category which he passed for – clerk or warehouseman. He could speak the language, but could not write it.

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**From Bexhill Chronicle 8th July 1916 (DSCF2109) – Local Tribunal**

#### **Provisions needed in wartime**

Mr Sydney Harold Wickens, 40, married, grocer and provision merchant, 34, Devonshire road, and 25, Sackville Road, applied for exemption. – Mr Harold Glenister supported the application, to which the military authorities did not assent, as Mr Wickens was not in a certified occupation. – Mr Glenister said that the appellant was not in a certified occupation. – The Mayor remarked that his (Mr Glenister's) contention was the other way about on the last occasion (laughter). – Reference was made to the previous applications in which Mr Freeman and Mr Burgess (in the employ of Mr Wickens) were concerned. – The

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Mayor: What is the position now? – Mr Glenister: Freeman got three months from this Tribunal; Burgess got six months conditional on appeal from the decision of the Local Tribunals. – Mr Moysey remarked that the previous case had been decided on the ground that Freeman was the manager of the shop. – A long discussion followed, in the course of which it was said that the Appeal Tribunal decided that Burgess was manager and granted him exemption. – Mr Glenister said that the claim of Mr Wickens for Burgess was on the ground that he was a departmental manager. There were other grounds in this case besides being a manager. Blundell who had been in Mr Wickens employed as a departmental manager, and who had not succeeded in getting exemption, had been called up that day. – Conditional exemption was granted for three months under Clause D (business hardship, etc.).

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**From Bexhill Chronicle 29th July 1916 (DSCF2157) – Appeal Tribunal**

### MUCH DISCUSSED CASES

The first case taken was that of Mr S. H. Wickens of Devonshire Road and Sackville Road, grocer and provision merchant. The military authorities appealed against the exemption granted by the Bexhill Tribunal on October 5th, when three months conditional exemption was granted. Mr Harold Glenister appeared for Mr Wickens, ??? as Mr Wickens manager, there was Major Grantham, for the military, claimed that Mr Burgess having been granted exemption as Mr Wickens manager, there was no reason why Mr Wickens himself should be exempted – Mr Wickens was then examined by Major Grantham: Were you present when Mr Burgess came up? – Mr Wickens: Yes – Will you tell the tribunal quite clearly the different duties you will have to take if Mr Burgess goes? You got an exemption for Mr Burgess was six months: – Yes, six months. – Now you are claiming for yourself? – Yes. I have two shops, one in Devonshire Road and the other in Sackville Road. – They are 200 to 300 yards from each other? – I have not measured. There are three streets between the shops, running in the same direction. The businesses have been carried on for 12 ½ years. At present I have Burgess and Freeman working, besides four women and myself and eight boys, but I have this morning engaged a man who is over military age. I got him by advertising. Mr Burgess has been with me 16 years. Before the war there were myself and 12 men of military age, as well as four or five boys. – That would be 16, and now you have the same? – Yes but not the same staff as respecting men. – Mr Wickens said he claimed for Mr Freeman as manager at Sackville road. He had also claimed for himself as manager, but had withdrawn the claim, as he found he had made a mistake. His solicitor had withdrawn it by his instructions. An explanation to that effect was made to Mr T. E. Rodgers, of the clerk to the Bexhill Tribunal. Freeman had been with him for 20 years, and both he and Burgess were good and useful men. – By Mr Glenister: both Burgess Freeman had been passed for military work. They were the only two men in his employ of military age. He (Mr Wickens) would be 41 next February. Freeman had been granted conditional exemption until August 31 and Burgess still December 19, 1916. 14 or 15 men in his employ had left him to enlist and these were the only two left. Many had been voluntarily on the outbreak of the war – Mr Wickens again laid before the Tribunal the annual balance sheets of his business for the last three years, and in reply to the Chairman said it would be impossible for Burgess to carry on the business, as he had had no experience in buying. He (as to Wickens) was married, with five children, and had been passed for Garrison duty abroad. His wife and family were utterly dependent upon him, and his going would be a great hardship, as it would mean the closing of his businesses. – Major Grantham: We don't suggest they should be closed – Mr Glenister: Could the businesses be carried on in your absence? – Decidedly not – After further questions had been answered, the Chairman announced that the appeal would be dismissed and the decision of the Local Tribunal confirmed.

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**From Bexhill Chronicle 30th September 1916 (DSCF2484) – Local Tribunal**

Mr S. H. Wickens, of Devonshire and Sackville Roads, asked for further exemption for H. F. Freeman. The military observation was that he had been passed for sedentary duty abroad the case should be adjourned for consideration until he was called up. – The application was disallowed, and Mr Wickens was told that he

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could appeal again when Mr Freeman was called up – the Mayor: You will be no worse situation then than now.

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### From Bexhill Chronicle 28th October 1916 (DSCF2340) – Local Tribunal

Mr H. Glenister applied on behalf of Mr S. H. Wickens (41), grocer and provisions merchant, of Devonshire and Sackville Roads, who claimed exemption on the ground not only that he was in a certified occupation, but that his business was one of national importance. – Mr Glenister emphasised the extensive character of the business in which all Mr Wickens capital was employed, and pointed out that he was engaged in the necessary work of food supplies. – Mr Wickens, in reply to Mr Glenister, said that of the only men employed in his shops were now Messers Freeman and Burgess. Blundell and Burchett had both gone into the army. Freeman was the manager under him (Mr Wickens) at Sackville Road and Burgess was the manager at Devonshire Road. The business could not be carried on in his absence. Financial considerations were placed before the Tribunal. The business was the largest in the town, and was the main source of his own income. He did all the buying. It could not be carried on in his absence, and would have to close it down if he were taken away. Buying was more important than ever now, as to buy rightly was very difficult at the present time. – The military authorities said that the Tribunal might consider if Mr Wickens services were indispensable to carrying on a necessary business. – Mr Glenister stated that there were seventeen men before the war, but now there were only five employed. – Mr Moysey remarked that that might be said of all businesses where the staff of been reduced. – Mr Glenister repeated that this was an exceptional case and urged that it was a business from the supply of food. – Mr Moysey (to Mr Wickens): If it were not for this business of yours you would be anxious to go and do your duty? – Mr Wickens said he was anxious to do all he could for his country. It was, he added impossible for Mr Burgess to do the buying or run the business in Devonshire Road alone. – Three months conditional exemption was allowed, provided Mr Wickens joined the VTC.

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### From Bexhill Chronicle 11th November 1916 (DSCF2379) – Local Tribunal

In the case of S. H. Wickens, grocer and provision dealer, of Devonshire and Sackville Roads, Bexhill, the Tribunal granted exemption with the volunteer condition attached, and the appellant now appeared and asked that it be removed. He was, he said, in a certified occupation, and, also, had a conscientious objection to taking part in military service. He was, however, quite willing to accept service under the Red Cross Brigade, and asked the Tribunal to change the conditions of the exemption in this respect.

The Mayor: Will that involves some real work?

Mr Wickens replied that it would; sometimes on Sundays as well as week days. He should be only too happy to do any work he could, especially in regard to the wounded.

The Town Clerk: Then the condition will have to be altered to the Red Cross instead of the Volunteer Regiment. The Tribunal agreed to the change.

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### From the "Bexhill Chronicle" - 17th February 1917 (DSCF3644) – Local Tribunal

## A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

S. Wickens (40), grocer and provision merchant, of Devonshire Road and Sackville Road, appealed on conscientious grounds, as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ he claimed exemption, having genuine

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conscientious objections to a system which had as its purpose the taking of life. He had two shops, which would have to be closed if he went, and he was just losing two lads of military age. He had lost every man eligible from the Devonshire Road shop.

The Town Clerk: You object to non-combatant service? – Yes, but I have no objection to ambulance work. – Do you object to participating in the use of arms in settling any dispute? – Yes – Col Brooke: It would be better to put it like this. If anyone were attacking your wife, would you stand and look on? – No, it would be my duty to protect my wife. – May I ask how long you have found yourself a conscientious objector? – I have been one since the age of sixteen.

The point had not been raised before, as he was previously in a certified occupation.

The whole course of his life had been changed by his conscientious views. He was, however, prepared to undertake some kinds of work, such as a special Constable, Red Cross work, etc. He had another brother working in a grocery business, which he considered was of national importance. – Colonel Brooke: But that is not work of national importance. – Two months (final) was granted, with exemption from combatant service.

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**From the "Bexhill Chronicle" - 17th March 1917 (DSCF3079) – Appeal Tribunal**

### **DOMESTIC AND BUSINESS RESPONSIBILITIES**

S. H. Wickens, (40), proprietor of two grocery shops, appealed on behalf of himself.

His business, it was stated, was a wholesale and retail one, while the chief grounds urged would domestic and business responsibilities. – The opinion of the Local Tribunal was that Freeman, who managed one of the businesses, was quite competent of carrying on the businesses in Mr Wickens absence. – Mr Wickens said that he could not leave Freeman in charge, for he could not do the buying, and it was a bad time to leave anyone incompetent. – Major Grantham: If one business was shut up Freeman could manage the other? – No, he could not, because there would be no one to buy. Practically all his capital was in the business, and it would be a big loss if he had to close down. – Three months final exemption was given

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**From the "Bexhill Chronicle" - 7th July 1917 (DSCF3287) – Appeal Tribunal**

### **NO ONE TO TAKE HIS PLACE**

G. H. Wickens (41), grocer, of Devonshire and Sackville Roads, applied for a renewal and was supported by Mr F. W. Morgan. He said he was the owner of the largest grocery and provision business in the town. He had a family of five to support and his business turnover was considerable, and it looked as though it would be in any increase this year. Neither of his other men could come and take his place if he went. He did all the buying and though the other men had been with him years they could not manage in his absence, and he would rather close the shop than leave them. – By Major Grantham: He had two brothers capable to serve, the eldest of whom had a business at Sidley and at Ninfield. If he went one of his businesses would have to close. He was also doing a considerable amount of Red Cross work. – Three months exemption was given.

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**From the "Bexhill Chronicle" dated 20th October 1917 (DSCF3473) – Appeal Tribunal**

## **Sidney Harold Wickens Tribunal Reports**

### **A NON-COMBATANT**

C. H Wickens (41), grocer of Devonshire and Sackville Roads, Bexhill, applied for a renewal of his exemption. Mr F. W. Morgan supported the claim. – By Mr Morgan: He applied both on conscientious and business grounds. He had originally been granted exemption from combatant service at Bexhill. His objection was on religious grounds, as he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and believed that taking life was contrary to His teaching. He was a member of the Plymouth Brethren, to which he had belonged since the age of 18 years. – In answer to the Chairman, Mr Wickens said that a few of the Brethren were serving. He would be willing to do anything but take life. On business grounds, he said that he was the largest grocer in the town, and had two shops, but had no one that he could leave in charge if he went. His wife could not assist, as she had never been in business. He had five children, their ages being from 10 to two years. He did some wholesale trade, though not so much now as before the war.

Owing to medical trouble he had to have a special diet, and he produced a medical certificate to that effect. He was passed B1, but did not consider himself fit for that category. – By Major Grantham: He had not mentioned his conscientious objections on some applications because he had been granted exemption from combatant service. He had no one to leave in charge of his business. His wife had never had any training in business, and his brother had no opportunity of looking after his business, and he had his own to attend to. He had a letter from him is saying that he was unable to do anything. His brother's health was bad. – By Mr Morgan: The business was beyond the capabilities of an untrained woman. – Four months conditional exemption was granted

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#### **From the "Bexhill Chronicle" dated 2nd March 1918 (DSCF3810) – Appeal Tribunal**

S. H. Wickens (41), grocer, appealed on behalf of himself. The grounds as previously urged still held good. He was passed in grade 3 – Mr F. W. Morgan appeared in this case. – Appellant had only two men and five boys, with seven women. He had no one to leave in charge if he went. He also urged conscientious objection, and had already been granted exemption from combatant service. – By Major Grantham: It would be a hardship if he went, but he agreed that he could stand it. He had been doing Red Cross Work for some time. His manager at the branch had never bought. He had been with him over 20 years, and his other man had been with him over 18 years. He would be unable to keep either of his shops open if he had to go. He had not asked any of his trade friends to assist.

His wife had never taken any interest in the business. – Mr Wickens said that he had increased work owing to the food tickets. He would be prepared to do more work with the Red Cross if he were called upon. – Two months (final). The Tribunal did not consider that he was doing enough work of national importance, and you would have to find other duties.

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#### **From the "Bexhill Chronicle" dated 18th May 1918 (P1010928) – Appeals Tribunal**

### **BEXHILL CASES AT THE APPEAL TRIBUNAL**

At the East Sussex Appeal tribunal on Wednesday the following Bexhill cases came up: SH Wickens (42), grocer. Three months on condition that he put in 30 hours a week of work of national importance.

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#### **From the "Bexhill Observer" dated 3rd June 1916 (P1050884) – Local Tribunal**

# Sidney Harold Wickens Tribunal Reports

## A GROCER'S APPLICATIONS

Mr Harold Glenister, solicitor, Hastings, appeared in support of four applications made by Mr Wickens of Messers Wickens and Son, grocery and provision merchants.

Mr H. F. Freeman, manager of the grocery and provision stores, at Sackville road, and Quartermaster of the local Red Cross, was the first. He also applied on his own behalf. Mr Freeman said that he had three lads with him, one of whom had been last engaged. He was 38 years of age

Mr Burgess, manager at Devonshire road, also did Red Cross work, and it was stated that he carried out duties on behalf of the Tunbridge Wells Equitable Friendly Society.

Dr Osborne supported the applications in regard to the Red Cross, and mentioned that 38 of his Red Cross men had joined.

Mr Wickens submitted that only three of his men remained, their places, with one exception, being filled by women and boys.

Mr Glenister said that of the three men two were before the tribunal. They claimed that Mr Burgess was in a certified occupation.

The military authorities assented to conditional exemption.

Mr Wickens said he supervised the shops in general, but he could not take charge of either of the shops. He bought for two of the shops.

The Mayor said that apparently Mr Burgess only took charge of the shop and bought some goods. It looked rather as though Mr Wickens was manager and the others were head assistants.

By Mr Glenister – Mr Burgess had responsible duties.

Mr Wickens said there were also assistants at that shop, and that if he went for a holiday, Mr Burgess took his place.

By Mr Veness – He (Mr Burgess) did not go out for orders. The eldest one under him at the shop was about 30 years of age, another was about 24, and there was a boy.

Mr Blundell applied on his own behalf, and also Mr Wickens. He was senior assistant and departmental manager of Devonshire road.

It was claimed that Mr Wickens business was the oldest probably the largest in the town and the business was increasing.

The military did not assent to the exemption.

By Mr Glenister – He manage the dispatch in the grocery departments. He was 29 years of age.

By Mr Carrick – He was senior assistant and departmental manager. He did not put "departmental manager" in his claim.

The Town Clerk suggested that there were no departmental stores in Bexhill.

Mr Wickens said he should say there were. The Mayor said that if Mr Wickens were a departmental store it was not a grocery and provision shop. By stores he supposed they meant where they also sold a number of other things.

The Town clerk said that departmental store shops meant the grocery department of stores

Mr Carrick said that Mr Blundell could not be magnified into a departmental manager. Mr Wickens supervised both businesses and it was a grave question whether either of the two claims should be granted.

Mr Birch it, 31, married, was the next applicant. He was a warehouse man; and it was stated by Mr Wickens that the work could not be done by a woman or a boy.

By the Town Clerk – He served the grocery trade in Bexhill. They supplied the truckloads of salt.

Mr Wickens said they did wholesale trade from the warehouse.

By Alderman Gibb – He was the only warehouse man left.

Mr Carrick said he did not think that any of the three claims would have born recommendation they now bore if the military had been away of what they knew now. He submitted that the claimants were head assistants.

Mr Glenister said the Mr Wickens had lost 11 men.

Mr Wickens said that there were four men in regard to whom the applications were made, and one other man. There were six boys and two women.

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Dr Osborne said that Mr Freeman was the right-hand man of the Red Cross and was particularly active and energetic.

Mr Carrick – But surely the needs of the Army were paramount to the Red Cross?

Dr Osborne – Exactly. Mr Osborne explained that Mr Freeman's services might not be indispensable to the Army.

With regard to Mr Wickens applications, the Tribunal granted three months exemption to Mr Freeman, and one month to Mr Burgess, and disallowed the others; on domestic grounds they gave Mr Blundell one month's exemption.

### **The Bexhill Observer**

**From the "Bexhill Observer" dated 24th June 1916 (P1050868) – Appeal Tribunal**

#### **SEASON DOUBLES GROCERY TRADE**

Mr Wickens, of Messers Wickens and Sons, grocers and provision merchant's (who were represented by Mr Harold Glenister, solicitor, Hastings), appeared in regard to of his employees, Mr JWD Burgess and Mr CG Blundell. The employer had stated that Mr Burgess was essential and did work which no woman could do; that Mr Burgess had been a manager for 16 years, and that nine men had already joined since the outbreak of the War. His (Mr Wickens) business was the largest of the kind in Bexhill, and the summer season was expected to be a heavy one. They also did a wholesale trade.

Mr Burgess had been granted a months exemption by the local Tribunal. Mr Blundell was senior assistant and departmental manager. The employer submitted that he supervised the shops, and that Mr Burgess was manager at Devonshire-road. The local Tribunal had raised the point as to whether Mr Burgess could be described as a "manager".

Mr Glenister intimated that he did not propose to contenders to how far the definition of a departmental manager would apply.

Mr Wickens said he personally took a large part in the business.

Mr Glenister – the Tribunal saying "probably the largest in Bexhill?" – Yes, I think so, of its kind.

Mr Wickens said he had lost eleven men, and at the Devonshire-Road business he had only the two for whom he was appealing instead of nine men. Exemption had been refused to his warehouseman, and a manager of another business had been given three months exemption. The Bexhill season was about to start.

Mr Glenister – Does that mean a tremendous rush in the grocery trade? – The trade is more than doubled.

Mr Wickens said that Blundell did heavy work. The lifting of sugar, eggs, etc., was heavy.

Replying to Major Grantham, Mr Wickens said that he had four women assistants at one shop. At the other he had boys instead.

Major Grantham – You find the four women quite useful, and able to do the work at the other shop? They are able to do part of the work. They cannot do it all. They will take a subordinate part.

Mr Wickens said he advertised in Bexhill paper for people of non-military age but he had no applicants except a man of 70, on one man who was mentally deficient. He offered good wages. He himself worked up to the hilt in the season. He did not shirk work.

By Mr Glenister – He would have three men left instead of twelve, including the two they were speaking of. The General Secretary of the Equitable Friendly Society had written a letter in support of the application for Mr Burgess, who was the secretary of the Bexhill branch, which had 1200-1500 members. The local Tribunal, in reference to this, said that the fact that Mr Burgess was employed from morning to night in his business was an indication that the secretarial duties were not so arduous that there would be real difficulty in finding a substitute.

The Tribunal granted Mr Burgess six months conditional exemption. In the case of Mr Blundell the decision of the local Tribunal was confirmed, and the appeal was dismissed.

## **Sidney Harold Wickens Tribunal Reports**

**From the "Bexhill Observer" dated 8th July 1916 (P1050855) – Local Tribunal**

### **EMPLOYER THREE MONTHS, EMPLOYEE SIX**

Mr H Glenister appeared for Sydney Harold Wickens, 40 (41 in February), grocer and provision merchant, sole proprietor of the business at Devonshire and Sackville-roads.

Mr Glenister said that it was claimed that Mr Wickens was in a certified occupation. The contention that is certain manager was in the certified occupation was withdrawn. The Appeal Tribunal gave him six months. The Military were under a misapprehension. Mr Wickens also claimed on the grounds that his continuance with his business was of national importance. It was a case of the one-man business, if nothing else.

Alderman Gibb – Is it not possible for your brother at Sidley to manage the business? Applicant – No, Sir.

Mr Glenister said that Mr Freeman, of the Sackville-road shop, got three months and Mr Burgess six months at the Appeal Tribunal on the grounds of business obligation to the employer.

Mr Moysey said it had been stated that Mr Burgess was manager.

Mr Glenister said that they found they were wrong. He was described as a manager in error.

The Clerk – A grocer should know better than a lawyer what a manager is.

Applicant was granted three months conditional exemption, with permission to apply again.

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**From the "Bexhill Observer" dated 29th July 1916 (P1050838) – Local Tribunal**

### **WOMEN AND BOYS IN GROCERY SHOPS**

The difficulties of a large grocery business were pointed out when Sydney Harold Wickens, grocer and provision merchant, who had been granted exemption to the 5th October, contested a military appeal. Mr Harold Glenister, solicitor, Hastings, represented Mr Wickens.

Mr Wickens claimed for Mr Burgess as his manager, to whom exemption had been granted. Subsequently a claim was put in by Mr Wickens. In opposition to this, it was submitted that Mr Burgess, as manager, was competent to carry on the business. The local Tribunal is satisfied that Mr Freeman was manager of one of the shops. Having regard for Mr Wickens age, business obligations, and on general grounds, the local Tribunal granted the exemption to Mr Wickens, against which the military now appealed.

Major Grantham said that Mr Wickens had obtained exemption for Mr Burgess six months, and now he was claiming for himself.

Mr Wickens, replying to Major Grantham, said that he had two businesses about five minutes walk from each other. Personally, he had been carrying on the business 12 or 12 ½ years. The whole staff of the two shops included Mr Burgess, Mr Freeman, four women, Mr Wickens, and eight boys, and a man was just arriving who was over military age, and who had come in response to an advertisement. Mr Burgess had been with the firm about 16 years.

By Major Grantham – Do you say the business is increasing? – It is.

How many did you have before the War? – Myself, 12 men of military age, and four or five boys.

Mr Wickens explained that with his grocery and provision shop – the largest in Bexhill – he had thought he was entitled to a manager on each side, but it was explained to him that he was not entitled to Mr Burgess as a manager, so they simply asked for exemption for him on the ground of business obligations. He had claimed for Mr Burgess as departmental manager, and for Mr Freeman as manager.

Mr Glenister said that in view of the explanation given by the Town Clerk of Bexhill as to the naming of "departmental manager," Mr Wickens did not think he was entitled to claim under that, and he had advised

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Mr Wickens that he was not. The exemption was not granted on the strength of certified occupation, but on the strength of business obligations.

Major Grantham – Burgess has been with you 16 years. How long has Freeman?

Mr Wickens – With the firm about 26 years.

Major Grantham – I hope I can take it that they are both good men? – They are both useful men, yes.

By Mr Glenister – They were the only two men in Mr Wickens employment who were of military age. Mr Freeman had been granted to 31st August, on the ground of business obligations. Mr Burgess had a certificate of exemption to 19th December, on account of business obligations of his employer.

Mr Glenister – How many men have left you and enlisted?

Mr Wickens – Fourteen or fifteen. They all attested, and most of them left in the first two months, before the Derby scheme. Your business is a large one, is it not? – It is.

Have you prepared balance sheets showing your turnover for the last three years? – Yes. (These were put in).

Would it be possible for Burgess to carry on these businesses if you were called up? – No, it would not.

Mr Wickens explained that Mr Burgess had not done much buying. The only thing he did in that way was in regard to orders for jam.

Mr Glenister – He is, nevertheless, a very useful man to you? – He is indeed.

Mr Glenister – You are married and have young children, you have been passed for Garrison duty abroad, and if your business were closed it would be a very great hardship.

Major Grantham – We do not suggest that you would have to close.

Mr Glenister – Is it possible to carry on the business in your absence? – No, it is not. Most decidedly not.

Mr Wickens said that with the exception of Mr Burgess and Mr Freeman, all the employees were new and very recent.

The Chairman – The appeal will be dismissed and the decision of the local Tribunal confirmed.

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### From the “Bexhill Observer” dated 30th September 1916 (P1050786) – Local Tribunal

S. H. Wickens applied for H. F. Freeman, manager of his Sackville-road shop.

The Military recommended that in view of the fact that this man had only been passed for sedentary work the case might be adjourned till he was called up.

The claim was disallowed, leave being given to apply if called up.

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### From the “Bexhill Observer” dated 28th October 1916 (P1050768) – Local Tribunal

#### A GROCER’S APPLICATION

Mr Harold Glenister, solicitor, Hastings, represented S. H. Wickens, 40, grocer and provision merchant, who applied for further exemption. Mr Wickens had three months conditional exemption from 5 July. The business was stated to be perhaps the oldest established in the town.

Mr Wickens said the only men he now had were Mr Freeman and Mr Burgess. Two others who had been before the Tribunal had now gone. Freeman was manager at Sackville-road and Burgess was head man at Devonshire-road. He had one other man, who was over military age.

Mr Harold Glenister said that this was probably the largest business in Bexhill and the oldest established.

The Mayor – all businesses are. Mr Glenister – Well, Sir, I think this really is.

Mr Wickens said he did all the buying, which is most important and more difficult than ever. He was on a certified occupation.

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Mr Glenister said that apart from the certified occupation, out of 17 employees, 12 had joined the colours. He submitted that it was a typical case of the one-man business.

Applicant was passed for Garrison duty abroad. Replying to Mr Moysey, Mr Wickens said he was anxious to do what he could to help his country, but it would be impossible for him to leave. The buying could not be done without him.

Three months conditional exemption provided Mr Wickens joined the Volunteers.

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**From the "Bexhill Observer" dated 11th November 1916 (P1050754) – Local Tribunal**

### **BEXHILL GROCER'S PLEA**

A well-known local grocer, Mr S. H. Wickens, re-appeared before the Bexhill Tribunal on Wednesday with a request.

At the previous hearing, it had been made a condition of exemption that he should join the Volunteers. Mr Wickens, who, it was stated, might have urged conscientious objection to military service if he wished but was not aware of the condition (having left the room), now asked that the condition might be varied to join in the Red Cross instead of the Volunteer Regiment.

Replying to the Mayor as to whether that would mean work, Mr Wickens said it would involve a lecture and a drill each week, and that he would also help with the wounded from trains if necessary. He would fulfil these conditions so far as was possible, bearing in mind his long hours and the approach to the Christmas season.

The Tribunal varied the condition accordingly.

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**From the "Bexhill Observer" dated 17th February 1917 (P1060322) – Local Tribunal**

### **A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR LOCAL GROCER AND THE VOLUNTEERS**

An unusual aspect of conscientious objection came before the Bexhill Tribunal on Thursday (Alderman F. Bond, J. P., presiding, when Mr S. H. Wickens, grocer and provision merchant, Devonshire-road and Sackville-road submitted conscientious objections against joining the Volunteers, which had been imposed on him as a condition of exemption.

Mr Wickens submitted in answer to written questions that, "as a believer in the Lord Jesus, and desiring to live here according to His Will, I claim exemption from military service, and have a genuine conscientious objection to being attached to that system which has as its object the taking of life", though he had every respect for those who did not hold his view. Mr Wickens mentioned that since his last appeal, Mr Burgess (one of his principal employees) had been refused further exemption. He was also losing two valuable lads, one just about 18. Eleven or twelve men had gone from the Sackville-road shop. His brother was in bad health, and could not take charge in his absence.

To the question, "Do you object to non-combatant service?" Mr Wickens replied that it was so closely related to military service.

The Town Clerk – You volunteered to do Red Cross work?

Mr Wickens – I feel I cannot possibly take life.

The Chairman – But you do not object to ambulance work.

## **Sidney Harold Wickens Tribunal Reports**

“Do you object to participate in the use of arms in any dispute” when the question, to which Mr Wickens replied, “I recognise that the State is to be upheld, and must be upheld, by arms”. He added that he took that question to mean in the case of a riot, if he were a special Constable.

Colonel Brooke (Military Representative) – If anybody were attacking your wife would you look on?

Mr Wickens – You mean any individual act? It is my duty to protect my wife.

Colonel Brooke – When did you first find you were a conscientious objector? – I have been a conscientious objector always, practically. Since I was 16.

Mr Wickens said the whole course of his life was changed by his conscientious objections. As to the question with regard to what sacrifices he had made on account of his views, he had made sacrifices of a personal nature, but he could not mention them without involving another person. He was ready to make any reasonable sacrifice that was suggested. He had been passed for garrison duty abroad.

By Alderman Gimp – He had an elder brother who was in a shop, but could not in any case take his (the speaker’s) business.

The Tribunal granted two months exemption, no further appeal to be made without leave from that Tribunal. During that time they would also grant exemptions from combatant service.

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**From the “Bexhill Observer” dated 17th March 1917 (P1060342)**

### **A BIG GROCER’S BUSINESS**

Sydney Harold Wickens, 41, B1, grocer, of Bexhill, had been given exemption until April 15th, but not renewable without further leave. He had also been given exemption from combatant service.

In the claim for further exemption, Mr Wickens set out that his age was near the limit, and he had a wife and five children dependent upon his business, in which he had placed all his capital. It was the biggest business of the kind in Bexhill and was both wholesale and retail. It would be impossible to keep it going with out applicant, and it was only kept going now, with great difficulty.

The local Tribunal said that the man was a bone-fide conscientious objector, but mainly relied upon his business liabilities. He had the biggest business in Bexhill of the kind, with two shops. If he were a wholesale grocer he would be in a certified trade, but he could not be regarded as being in a certified trade.

A man named Freeman, passed C3, was competent to manage the business in the employer’s absence.

Mr Wickens said that Freeman was at a branch shop, and not at the head establishment. Fourteen men had joined up, and there was no man left with exemption at the present time. Freeman started with him as an errand boy, and had worked up to be branch manager, but was not competent to manage the whole concern. There was no one to do the buying, which was exceedingly difficult at the present time. If appellant had to go he would have to close his business.

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**From the “Bexhill Observer” dated 7th July 1917 (P1060704) – Appeal Tribunal**

### **APPEALS**

At the Appeal Tribunal on Thursday, E. F. Waghorn, C3, master butcher, was given three months, and S. H. Wickens, B1, 41, grocer, three months.

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**From the “Bexhill Observer” dated 20th October 1917 (P1060503) – Appeal Tribunal**

# Sidney Harold Wickens Tribunal Reports

## THE BRETHREN

Views held by some of The Brethren (or, as they are commonly called, "Plymouth Brethren") came up in the application of S. H. Wickens, grocer, 41, for whom Mr Morgan also appeared.

Applicant had submitted in support of further exemption that he was the owner of the largest grocery and provision houses in Bexhill. His present staff of 15 comprised only two men. He could not make arrangements for carrying on his business in his absence, nor could he sell it. He had a wife and family. He had conscientious objections to combatant military service but he did Ambulance work.

By Mr Morgan – Anything else other than combatant service he was prepared to do.

By the Chairman – Mr Wickens was granted exemption from combatant service but the last exemption by the Appeal Tribunal was on ground D.

Mr Morgan said the business grounds for exemption were very strong in this case.

The Chairman, referring further to the views of Mr Wickens, Mr Morgan put the question, "What is your objection?"

Mr Wickens – On religious grounds. I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe it is contrary to His teaching and example to take human life

Mr Morgan – Under any circumstances?

Mr Wickens – Well, not in capital punishment, but –

Mr Morgan – But apart from civil matters, what body do you belong to?

Mr Wickens – What is known as the Plymouth Brethren.

Do you hold office? – No, we hold no office, but brothers take part in the services.

By the Chairman – He had been a member of that body since he was 18.

The Chairman – Some Plymouth Brethren serve.

Mr Wickens – Yes, but very few. That is not a tenet held by the body.

By Mr Morgan – He did Ambulance work, and was willing to do even Army Ambulance work. He had no one to leave in charge as a substitute if he went away. His wife could not undertake the charge of the business. One brother had been ill for a long time.

By Mr Huggett – His eldest child was 11 years old.

By Lieut-Colonel Papillon – one brother had business at Sidley, but it was a country general stores, and quite a different business.

By the Chairman – He (Mr Wickens) did a wholesale trade with bakers and grocers, but not so much wholesale trade as before the War because he had lost three warehousemen. His other brother was a grocer at another place but he expected to be doing work for the Y. M. C. A.

By Mr Morgan – He himself had gastric trouble which necessitated special diet.

Major Grantham – Looking through these various papers, I see that on different dates you do not say anything about your conscience.

Mr Wickens – That is when the Local Tribunal had already granted me exemption from combatant service.

Major Grantham suggested that the brother at Sidley might give up the drapery, china, general stores and paraffin and take charge of Mr Wickens business.

Mr Wickens – no, Sir, his health is very bad indeed.

Mr Morgan said it was a large business, quite beyond the capability of an undertrained woman.

The Tribunal gave four months exemption

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From the "Bexhill Observer" dated 2nd March 1918 (P1060901) – Appeal Tribunal

## GROCER AND NATIONAL SERVICE

Sidney Harold Wickens, 41, Grade 3 from B1, grocer, Bexhill, applied for further exemption and was represented by Mr F. W. Morgan, solicitor.

## **Sidney Harold Wickens Tribunal Reports**

Mr Wickens said that his staff was much smaller than it had been. The turnover had increased, and was half as much again as when he last was before the Tribunal. There were a great many difficulties in carrying on a big business at the present time and he had nobody capable of doing his work. He suffered from bad health. He did not put his case forward as one of hardship, but considered he would be much better if kept where he was. He was a conscientious objector as regarded combatant service, but was not opposed to non-combatant service.

By Major Grantham – He had no brothers serving and he had no sons old enough to serve. His brother's sons were serving. He had done Red Cross work since 1916. Mr H. F. Freeman had been with him for 20 years, and had managed a small branch for about 12 years. He did not do much buying except in the way of biscuits and jam. He did not do the general buying. His clerk had been with him 18 years, but he could not do the buying. He knew of nobody who could keep the business going. He thought he could claim all the grocers of Bexhill as his friends, but he had not asked any of them to carry on his business if he had to go. His wife could not supervise the business. He was not prepared to leave his financial interests in incompetent hands. He would close rather do that.

In answer to the Chairman, Mr Wickens said this year he had put in 30 hours for the Red Cross. He did all that he was asked to do, and when there were more troops at Cooden, there was considerably more work. He had been very busy with Food Cards and possibly that was why he had not been called upon more. He was prepared to do whatever was asked of him in that direction.

Two months exemption was given, the Chairman expressing the opinion that Mr Wickens was not doing enough work of National importance. Next time he must be prepared to show that he was doing a great deal more work for the Red Cross or other organisation – that the Tribunal left to him.

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**From the "Bexhill Observer" dated 18th May 1918 (P1060957) – Appeal Tribunal**

### **THIRTY HOURS NATIONAL WORK**

Sydney Harold Wickens, grade 3, 42, grocer, applied for further exemption, his previous two months having expired. In reply to Mr FW Morgan applicant said that in addition to doing Red Cross work he was engaged one day each week on a farm from 2 a.m... to 3 p.m. – Three months on condition that thirty hours work of National importance was done weekly.

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