

## Whiskey Thief Has Returned to Hurling

South Kilkenny teenager who assaulted a Garda after being caught stealing whiskey had 21 previous convictions, Carrick-on-Suir District Court heard.

But it was also told that the defendant, Conor Keegan from Bessborough Walk, Banagher Court, Piltown, had now left crime behind him and resumed his hurling career.

Keegan (19) admitted stealing a bottle of Jameson from Centra in Piltown, assaulting Sergeant Cashman as he investigated the crime and breaching the Public Order Act by being drunk and a danger to himself and others and also using threatening and abusive language.

The court was informed that the case arose from an incident on February 9th of last year and Sergeant Brian Cooper outlined the details.

He said that having stolen the whiskey, Keegan returned to the scene as Sergeant Cashman was investigating. He attempted to run away, having first been extremely abusive to the sergeant in front of customers in the shop.

As the sergeant prevented his departure and arrested him he assaulted the officer by kicking and kneeing him. He continued being abusive and called the sergeant a f\*cking pig. He became violent again in the patrol car before being brought to Thomastown Garda Station.

Sergeant Cooper said the whiskey had not been returned and the defendant had 21 previous convictions, the last of them for theft last October, for which he was put on probation for a year.

Solicitor Michael Quirke, for Keegan, said he was on social welfare. He had a lot of difficulties in his youth. He had been living with his father in Piltown but fell out with him and was then living rough and became involved with drink and drugs.

His life hit a new low early this year when he ended up in hospital following an episode of self-harm.

But he seemed now to have turned a corner and had become a very different type of person.

He had some counselling and was attempting to sort out his life. He had returned to hurling with the James Stephens club and trained with them regularly. He was also seeking to commence a course in social care at WIT.

He accepted his behaviour on the date of the offences was reprehensible. He regretted it and maintained he subsequently paid for the whiskey. He had embarked on a new path and was anxious to put his past behind him.

Judge Terence Finn said he hoped that path was one of sobriety. The defendant had a formidable record and didn't appear to have learned from his court appearances in the past.

He adjourned the issue of penalty to December 4th next and requested a probation report.

He also bailed him to appear at Waterford District Court on July 10 on a separate charge, under the Misuse of Drugs Act.