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## Husband and ex-wife jailed over series of historic sex offences

William Abbott, 61, and his ex-wife Helen Ward sentenced to a total of 26 years for their involvement in crimes dating back three decades



William Abbott

Andrew Price/Viewfinder Pictures

A 61-year-old man has been jailed for 16 years after being convicted of historic sex offences dating back 30 years.

William Abbott, a practising Jehovah's Witness at the time, subjected one young girl to a bizarre "rape test".

He told her that she would have to learn to fight off men in later life and tested her to see if she was strong enough to fight off a rapist.

She was not – and he cynically ended up raping her for his own sexual gratification.

His former wife Helen Ward, 60, was convicted of aiding and abetting him – and was jailed for ten years.

Both Abbot, of Pickering Road in Wallasey, and Ward, of Green Lane in Shotton, were placed on the sex offender register for life.

Judge Philip Hughes, sitting at Mold Crown Court, also made them subject of SOPOs, Sexual Offences Prevention Orders, which prevents them being alone with children in the future.

Abbott was convicted of two rapes and an attempted rape on a female child and two indecent assaults on a boy.

Ward – said to have been controlled by Abbott at the time – was convicted of aiding and abetting rape, attempted rape and indecent assault.

They denied all charges but were convicted at an earlier hearing.

The judge said that they had both been convicted of serious sexual offences against children going back 30 years, to the early 1980s.

They were committed against a background of illicit drug taking.

Abbott, he said, was controlling and his victims had been threatened not to disclose what had happened to them.

They had blighted the lives of their victims and caused them emotional damage.

Abbott had told one victim that she had to undergo a "rape test", the judge explained.

He claimed he was doing her a favour so that she might know what to expect from men and learn how to fend them off.

But he had cynically raped her.

Ward had persuaded the victim to succumb to his advances.

“You both know that for this kind of sexual abuse only long custodial sentences are appropriate,” the judge told them.

He branded Abbott a domineering man and a bully.

Ward had come under his influence and assisted him in what he was doing.

The judge said that he had read testimonials written on their behalf which showed that since the offences 30 years ago they had impressed others and had displayed a rather more responsible attitude.

Abbott stood with his eyes closed as the 16 year sentence was passed and showed no emotion.

Ward stood with her hand over her mouth when the ten year sentence was passed.

They were then handcuffed and led to the cell block.

Prosecuting barrister Karl Scholz said that the defendants, both practising Jehovah's Witnesses at the time, had committed the offences 30 years ago and believed that they were hidden in their past. But the victims came forward to explain what had occurred all those years ago.

Desmond Lennon, for Abbott, said that his client did not accept the allegations made against him.

Dafydd Roberts, for Ward, said that she and her former husband divorced many years ago and she now had a new life.

He said it was clear that he had intimidated and used violence against her years ago and that she had come under his influence.

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