

'If sex is out of the question can I just have a grope?' What Jehovah's Witness is accused of asking woman locked in his Jaguar

The woman told a court she was terrified when Mark Sewell asked her the question inside his locked car on derelict dockland

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Mark Sewell

A Jehovah's Witness elder locked a woman inside his Jaguar on derelict dockland and asked if he could "have a grope", a court has heard.

Churchgoer Mark Sewell propositioned the woman for sex and quizzed her about her sexual history, a jury was told.

The woman said she was "terrified".

The businessman, 53, denies a total of 12 historic sex charges against girls and women over more than 10 years.

On Wednesday, the woman told Merthyr Crown Court Sewell became "a bit too familiar" within just weeks of knowing her in the mid-1990s.

He would massage her neck and shoulders without her asking, she said.

"I used to shrug him off but then he used to make out I was being stupid, like he was just being friendly, and it was just a joke.

"He used to tell me not to be stupid, that he was only massaging me and there was nothing wrong with it."

Sewell would also ask the woman to kiss him and sit on his lap, she said.

"I was quite young - not young but I was naive, I had only been in one relationship.

"To me, because he was an older, mature man, I didn't really know how to react to be quite honest.

"I knew it was wrong but then I thought he was joking."

The woman, wearing a short-sleeved black top and black trousers, said she "never" kissed him, adding: "I told him I didn't fancy him."

She broke down as she told the court how Sewell had taken her out for a drive in his Jaguar and parked up in a "derelict area" of Barry Docks.

Fighting back tears, the woman claimed he had locked the car doors and then started to ask questions about her sex life.

"He said he would look after me if I left my partner," she said, adding that he asked her to do that.

"Then he took his seatbelt off and moved over, asking me if we could have sex."

The woman said she repeatedly asked him to drive back into Barry.

"He then said something like 'If sex is out of the question can I just have a grope?' I was terrified. I was frozen, I was just sat there."

The woman also claimed he had rubbed his groin against her bottom as she made a cup of tea.

Sewell has been charged with indecent assault in respect of that alleged incident.

The woman also told the court how several years later she went to the Jehovah's Witnesses Kingdom Hall in Barry to complain about Sewell, believing him still to be an elder in the congregation.

"I told them he shouldn't be in the position he was within the church with females, using his authority where they are young and vulnerable and where they know right from wrong but they look up to him."

The court had earlier heard how respected Jehovah's Witness Sewell used his "position of power" as an elder in the Barry congregation to "exploit and abuse" women and children for more than a decade.

Between 1985 and 1995 Sewell is alleged to have abused two young girls and also raped a woman, all of whom were fellow Jehovah's Witnesses.

He is also accused of indecent assault against the woman who gave evidence today.

Sewell, wearing a navy suit with a blue shirt and red tie, followed proceedings on a hearing loop as he sat in the glass-fronted dock.

The defendant, of Porthkerry Road in Barry, denies 11 counts of indecent assault and a single count of rape.

The case, which is expected to last three weeks, continues.

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