

Jehovah's Witness elder accused of child abuse and rape: Jury retires to consider verdict

Businessman Mark Sewell, 53, denies nine historic sex charges against girls and women in a period spanning more than eight years.

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Mark Sewell

Jurors trying a former Jehovah's Witness elder over allegations of child abuse and rape have retired to consider their verdicts.

Businessman Mark Sewell, 53, denies nine historic sex charges against girls and women in a period spanning more than eight years.

The former Butlins holiday camp driver is alleged to have "shredded" a woman's knickers when he pinned her down and raped her.

It has also been claimed he kissed a schoolgirl and stroked her as he wore only his underpants, while it is also alleged Sewell gave another teenage girl topless massages.

During 11 days of evidence at Merthyr Tydfil Crown Court the jury of four men and eight women 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.

Between 1987 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 indecently assaulting another woman by rubbing his groin against her as she made a cup of tea.

The greying defendant, wearing a navy suit over a white shirt and royal blue tie, looked straight ahead in the glass-fronted dock as Judge Richard Twomlow summed up the case before sending the jury out to deliberate.

Sewell, of Porthkerry Road in Barry, denies eight counts of indecent assault and a single count of rape.

Earlier in the trial Judge Twomlow directed the jury to return not guilty verdicts on three further indecent assault counts, which the defendant had also denied.

The case continues.

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