

LIZARD WOMAN BOUND OVER

A PRETTY, fair-haired girl, her face wet with tears, stood in the dock at Penzance Quarter Sessions on Friday, and heard the Recorder (Mr. H. B. Durley Grazebrook, K.C.), bind her over for twelve months in the sum of £5 for effecting a public mischief.

Defendant was twenty-one-years-old Kathleen Vera Johnson Barrett, a married woman with two children, of 2, Cottage-row, The Lizard.

The public mischief, to the commission of which she pleaded guilty, consisted of a false statement that an airman had entered her house and indecently assaulted her. She described the man, but later admitted her statement was false and that she had made it to cover up the fact that she thought she was going to have a baby as a result of her association with a local man named Brian Richards. There was in fact no truth in her surmise.

Prosecuting, Mr. W. H. Thorne (Helston), said Mrs. Barrett had made the accusation of the indecent assault, probably amounting to rape, to a police-constable on the morning of March 9. Later the same day she attended an identification parade of members of the R.A.F. at a nearby aerodrome, and still later that day repeated her story to Sgt. French.

The next day she again told her story to Supt. Morcumb, who took her to Truro for examination by Dr. Hocking (county pathologist), when she again repeated her story and demonstrated how the alleged assault had taken place.

DEMONSTRATION

Supt. Morcumb took her back to The Lizard, where she demonstrated to him and Sgt. French where she had been sitting when the assault had taken place.

Finally, after she had again been taken to Predannack aerodrome, she admitted that her story was completely false and that Richards had been in her company at the time she said the assault had occurred.

She had, she told Sgt. French, been friendly with Richards. She had got worried, and had told Richards of her suspicions, and he had said that she must do something or he would get drunk and shoot himself and she would have that on her mind for the rest of her life.

She had thought it would be best to make up the story that she had been assaulted.

Mr. Thorne said he was instructed not to press the charge, because it was appreciated that the effect of her action would probably be to have broken up her home completely. But great inconvenience and annoyance had been caused to members of the public, because the only manner in which the police could test her story was by examining them. There had, too, been at least a hundred men at the identification parade.

Dr. Hocking spent seven hours on the matter and the police had been engaged for a total of 78 hours. Three police officers had to make car journeys aggregating 215 miles.

Mr. Thorne concluded: "Members of the public must appreciate that they cannot lightly make accusations which are false to responsible members of the police force."

A police officer stated that Mrs. Barrett had been married at the age of seventeen. She had not heard from her husband, who was now in the Army in Austria, for some time. He had not sent any presents for the children last Christmas, and, when he had had ten days' leave, she had only seen him because she had fetched him from St. Austell for the last two days.

HER REGRET

Expressing accused's regret at the trouble she had caused, Mr. A. A. Thorne (Helston) said it might be felt that only a woman of a hitherto good character would have gone to such lengths to hide what she supposed her condition was.

"We are apt to blame the war for a great many things," said Mr. Thorne, "but perhaps you may feel this is a result of the war."

Her parents were respectable people, as she had been in the past. She had imperilled her marriage and that might be considered a sufficient punishment.

Replying to Mr. Thorne and the Recorder, Mrs. Barrett said she did not know if letters she had written had reached her husband. She had not seen Richards since the alleged offence.

Binding Mrs. Barrett over the Recorder said: "It is not generally known what a serious matter this type of offence is. It can be the subject-matter of two years' imprisonment."

"You made this false accusation to the police and persisted in it for some considerable time, and it was only when you knew that the police had information that Richards was with you at the time when you say the assault on you was made that you made a clean breast of things."

"You have wasted the time of the police to the extent of some 78 hours, and you have put various members of the public to inconvenience by causing them to be interviewed, including those at the identification parade."

"It is really a serious matter and I want you to realise that."

"You do not seem to have had very much chance of establishing your home life since your marriage, by reason of the war. I have some information in regard to your husband's apparent neglect of you, but that does not seem to me to justify the course you have taken or the behaviour you have admitted."

"In view of the fact that you have no previous convictions, that you have two children and that apparently you are a good mother to those children I am going to give you a chance and bind you over for twelve months in the sum of £5."

"Let it be a lesson to you and do not make any of this type of accusation again. Try and regain your self-respect, and if it is at all possible, reinstate your married life and see if you cannot do something to make it successful on your side."