

## Former biology teacher, 67, is cleared of taking a 14-year-old pupil's virginity at a Catholic school in the 1970s after four trials and a lengthy inquiry

- Joseph Cheesbrough was arrested in 2013 over claims he had a secret fling
- The accuser said she was just 14 when she lost her virginity to Cheesbrough
- The twice married father of six, now 67, always denied any affair took place
- He claimed she was after compensation after her business went bust

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A former biology teacher who faced a four year inquiry and four trials into claims he had an extra marital affair with a pupil in the 1970s was cleared by a jury of wrongdoing in less than two hours today.

Joseph Cheesbrough was arrested in 2013 over allegations he had a two year fling with a teenager when he was appointed the youngest male member of staff at the former all girls St Hilda's Roman Catholic High School in Burnley.

The accuser said she was 14 when she lost her virginity to Cheesbrough more than 40 years ago and claimed he even made her go on the pill to stop her getting pregnant. She went to police in 2013.

But Cheesbrough, a twice married father of six, now 67, denied any affair took place claiming the woman, now aged 56 made up her allegations in pursuit of compensation.

He said her business went bust when she developed a drinking problem and dismissed his former pupil's claims as 'ridiculous'.

He said: 'She has a lot to gain from this. My understanding is these kind of cases have seen CPS standing up on the news inviting people to come forward with sexual allegations saying they will be believed and they will have their identities protected.'



**Former teacher Joseph Cheesbrough (pictured) was arrested in 2013 over claims he had a secret two year fling with a teenager**

'They will be immune from prosecution and at the end of it, if it's successful, there's a large financial payment. But I've had my reputation destroyed never to get it back again and all the costs I've had to bear are not recoverable.

'Over the many months we can only come to one conclusion - that she was desperate to save her marriage and I got the blame for her alcoholism and there's a large financial loss that took place when she lost her business and had to pay the cost of the debts.

'That's the only conclusion I can come to that would suggest an ex-pupil would make these allegations. Why am I here? Why are you doing this to me? I've not done any harm. Everybody knows about compensation being paid out, it's huge. I read £28,000 was paid out recently.'

At Burnley Crown Court Cheesbrough was acquitted of nine charges of indecent assault and two serious sexual offences following a third re-trial after three others dating back to 2015 were aborted for legal reasons.

As the foreman gave the verdicts Cheesbrough's daughter began sobbing as he turned to the panel and thanked them after they spent one hour and 41 minutes deliberating. He declined to comment after the hearing.

The court heard Cheesbrough met the pupil in 1974 at a time when the school staff comprised almost entirely of nuns.



**Mr Cheesbrough was appointed the youngest male member of staff at the former all girls St Hilda's Roman Catholic High School in Burnley. Hameldon Community College (pictured) replaced St Hilda's RC Girls' High School in Burnley**

The woman - who hailed from a strict Catholic family - claimed she was in her third year at the school at the time - and said she was a 'giggling school' charmed by Cheesbrough's 'charismatic, loud and brash' method of teaching.

She said the romance continued after she left school aged 16 but they split up shortly afterwards following a row.

In an interview with police, the accuser who cannot be named, told officers: 'He was a young teacher at the time and we only had two other male members of staff and they were considerably older and more head master type. He caused a stir at the school when he came.

'I know now it's not right but I was a very young girl and a virgin at the time. The pretence was I was always cleaning the bus or I was actually babysitting but on the way home a sexual encounter would always take place.

'His wife and children would be away visiting friends or out for the day. We had sex more than than twenty or thirty times. I was a naive girl at the time. My dad was a very strict person and would never let me wear makeup or jewellery or perfume so I was never dressed provocatively or anything. I just dressed like a 14 year old girl.

But Cheesbrough - who worked in the nuclear industry before returning to education as a technical trainer - said: 'It's hurtful that I have an ex-pupil making accusations against me.

'I never had unprotected sex with her - and I think being a biology teacher I would have been very silly to do so.

'You can imagine the shock and horror of four police officers knocking on your door saying you are being arrested for rape. I was in sleep when effectively they raided my house.

'I think alcohol plays a very large part in people's lives and that's why when she became alcohol dependent when she made this story up. I've lost my reputation. I was arrested early in the morning and I've never experienced anything like it. It was horrible.'