

Pensioner cleared of 'false memory' farm rape claims

By [Exeter Express and Echo](#) | Posted: May 20, 2015

A pensioner has been cleared of raping a girl on a farm 40 years after a jury were told the alleged victim may have been affected by false memory syndrome.

Roger Mennell, aged 67, has never been in trouble in his life but has spent two years fighting the allegations which the woman made during psychotherapy sessions.

She alleged he had raped and sexually assaulted her while visiting her family at a farm near Tiverton in the 1970s when she was seven or eight.

She told Exeter Crown Court how Mennell had used a knife to stab, cut open and kill a farm cat as a means of terrifying her into silence. She allegedly he said he would do the same to her family if she revealed his abuse.

Mennell, who now lives in South Devon, said he had only visited the farm once and had no physical contact with the girl. He said he was an animal lover who found the allegations 'unbelievable and horrible'.

He was found not guilty within an hour by the jury after they heard from his ex wife, three daughters, and five family friends who all said he had never shown any sexual interest in children.

Mennell, of Hillside Drive, Kingsbridge, denied rape, and three counts of indecency and was discharged by Judge Francis Gilbert, QC, after being acquitted by the jury.

The prosecution alleged the assaults took place on a country walk and inside the complainant's childhood home on an isolated farm near Bolham.

Mennell said there was no truth in the allegations, which were first made in a series of letters from the woman's family in 1994, 20 years after the alleged rape.

He said he had taken that letter to the police because he knew it to be untrue and felt it was threatening. He also told his wife, children and family about the letters so they were aware of the false allegations he was facing.

He told the jury: "I have not raped or abused anyone. The allegation that I took a knife to a cat is unbelievable and horrible."

Miss Mary McCarthy, defending, told the jury the complainant may well believe she had been abused but they should question whether her memory was genuine or false.

She pointed out the woman told nobody at all for 20 years and only revealed her allegations in dribs and drabs during extensive therapy.

She said: "It may be this is an example of a case where someone comes to believe what has happened, no doubt through repetition with their family and also in therapy. She has come up with more things which she had repeated to others as important.

"A lot of things came out in therapy and the jury have to consider if those are reliable memories or false memories. When people develop false memories they are often latched on to things that did happen but which are reconstructed in a different way.

"What is the likelihood of these things happening over a three day weekend with the girl's mother in the house and not having an inkling of what was happening and with another child running around.

"He could not have done the things which have been described undetected. He has always said he has no interest in children. If he was a guilty man, why would he have gone to the police with the threatening letters in 1994.

"He gave them the name and details of his accused. That may have led to a criminal investigation. The way he acted is entirely supportive of his innocence."

<http://www.exeterexpressandecho.co.uk/Pensioner-cleared-false-memory-farm-rape-claims/story-26540985-detail/story.html>