

CLEARED IN MINUTES

A JURY took just 10 minutes to find a man not guilty of rape.

The unanimous verdict added the name of James Crook, 21, to an increasing list of men wrongly accused by women.

"Rape is an easy allegation to make," said his female barrister Beverley Phipps yesterday.

Mr Crook, who lives with his parents at Fonmon Park Road, Rhose, Vale of Glamorgan, had always denied the charge - brought two years after it was said to have taken place.

The girl who made the allegation admitted she had willingly slept with him on other occasions - and had also sent him a Valentine's card - but

'Rape an easy allegation to make'

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claimed that on that one day she had been forced to have sex against her will.

She said she couldn't remember any details about what happened immediately afterwards - only that she had cried.

But Mr Crook said it had not

happened and that sex between them had always been with her full consent.

Ms Phipps asked the jurors - seven men and five women - to imagine themselves or their families put in the same position.

She said: "These complaints are easy to make because there was no-one around at the time to see any different - apart from the man arrested and now sitting in the dock."

During a two-day trial, the girl did

not deny she had later sent Mr Crook messages including a Valentine card on which she had written: "I love you so much."

Ms Phipps asked: "Do you really write things like that after being raped?"

When he was arrested and taken to Barry police station earlier this year, Mr Crook said - as he repeated in court - that he was innocent.

He said the girl was "making it up" and he did not know why.

Girl did not deny she later sent messages including a Valentine card which included the words 'I love you so much'

MY FAMILY'S RAPE HELL

Mum tells of seven-month torment

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A MOTHER has spoken about the hell her family has been put through after her son was charged with rape.

A jury took just minutes to clear 21-year-old James Crook of the charge at Cardiff Crown Court.

His mother, Diane, said the seven-month ordeal has been a "nightmare" and called for men charged with rape to have a right to anonymity.

■ Our ordeal: See Page 2.

NIGHTMARE

Mum of cleared man tells of family's hell

THE MOTHER of a man who was cleared of an allegation of rape has spoken of their seven months of "hell".

A jury took just 10 minutes to find 21-year-old James Crook not guilty of raping a young woman, who cannot be named because of legal reasons, after a two-day trial.

Mr Crook, who lives with his parents and his 17-year-old brother at Fommon Park Road, Rhoose, Vale of Glamorgan, had always denied the charge - brought two years after it was said to have taken place.

James' mother Diane, 52, said: "It's been a nightmare.

"I was a witness during the trial, which was horrific.

"I've been having panic attack after panic attack.

"The woman made the allegation in May.

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"I feel sorry for her that she had to say something like that.

"I don't know why she did it.

"There was no evidence at all and the case went all the way to court when it should not have done.

"The whole of the first day of the trial I did nothing but shake. It was unbelievable.

"I burst into tears when the jury found James not guilty.

"It was like somebody had taken a huge weight off my shoulders.

"I just felt like my heart was going to burst."

Mrs Crook said James, employed as a roofer, was "just relieved" at the unanimous not guilty verdict but said it would take "a

while" for him to get over the case, which he still cannot talk about.

"I think if the complainant can remain anonymous then I think the defendant should also have the same right.

"He was accused of something he did not do.

"When the trial goes on for more than one day then people just start presuming.

"I think the defendant should have anonymity unless they are found guilty," she said.

The woman admitted she had willingly slept with Mr Crook on other occasions - and had also sent him a Valentine's card - but claimed that on one day she had been forced to have sex against her will.

But Mr Crook said it had not happened and that sex between them had always been with her full consent.

FOR ANONYMITY

Defendants accused of rape should have anonymity.

"Anonymity for complainants encourages malicious complaints which has tragic affects. If there's anonymity for the complainant, then there should be anonymity for the defendant."

George McAulay, chairman of the UK Men's Movement - a lobby group for men's rights.

AGAINST ANONYMITY

Rape defendants should not have the right to anonymity.

"It is important that justice is seen to be done. There is an argument that by releasing the names of the defendant, it has enabled new evidence to come forward that helps the accused be acquitted. If there's anonymity for defendants then that can't happen. On balance it's better that the justice system is seen to be open."

Barry Hugill, director of communications for human rights and civil liberties organisation Liberty.