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Jury ordered to clear Rossendale men of rape charges

By Chris Adams

TWO men from Rossendale have been cleared of raping a woman after a night out.

Judge Andrew Woolman directed the jury at Burnley Crown Court to find Garry Carl Love and Andrew Brendan Walsh not guilty of attacking a 34-year-old woman in Britannia, near Bacup.

The trial was expected to run until today but Judge Woolman ruled that the men, both 26, had no case to answer after hearing the prosecution's evidence.

During a speech by defence barristers before their clients were due to give evidence, Judge Woolman said he had not heard sufficient evidence to put before the jury for them to make a finding on Mr Walsh.

Mark Monaghan, prosecuting, said the evidence against Mr Love no longer presented a realistic chance of prosecution and both men were acquitted.

Mr Love, of Market Street in Britannia, near Bacup, and Mr Walsh, of The Ferns, Bacup, had always denied one count each of raping the woman in Old Lane on June 10 last year.

She had accused the pair of raping her after they shared a taxi from Rawtenstall to Bacup in search of drugs.

Earlier this week, the court heard how the woman had consensual sex in a Rawtenstall graveyard with another man earlier the same night.

Keith Harrison, defending Mr Love, had also shown the jury a short-sleeved 'aubergine' T-shirt his client was wearing on the night.

The complainant had claimed Mr Love, referred to in court as 'the skinny man', was wearing a long-sleeved, orange and black checked shirt.

Mr Harrison had also challenged an earlier claim by the woman that her underwear was removed without her assistance after she admitted taking her foot out of the garment.

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