

Commuter who walked past actress at Waterloo station cleared of 'bizarre' sex assault claim

Mark Pearson may not even have made physical contact with woman in her 60s on busy concourse - but CPS approved sex assault charge

 Mark Pearson seen on CCTV footage recorded at Waterloo Underground Station

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By David Barrett, Home Affairs Correspondent

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A commuter has been cleared of sexually assaulting a well-known actress after a jury rejected claims the crime could have taken place in a brief half-second contact in a busy railway station.


• UPDATE: Prosecutors slowed down CCTV in case of commuter cleared of 'bizarre' sex assault on actress

Mark Pearson, a 51-year-old artist and picture framer, was accused of brushing against the actress, who cannot be named for legal reasons, in a mass of train passengers at London's Waterloo station.

"I feel I have undergone a form of mental torture sanctioned by the state."

Mark Pearson

CCTV footage showed Mr Pearson, who was a complete stranger to the alleged victim, did not break his stride as he walked past the woman, who was heading to a rehearsal.

 Mark Pearson said he had endured a year-long “Kafkaesque nightmare” as a result of the complaint

Mark Pearson said he had endured a year-long "Kafkaesque nightmare" as a result of the complaint Photo: ITV/This Morning **The defendant, who said he had endured a year-long “Kafkaesque nightmare” as a result of the complaint, blamed the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for forcing him to endure “mental torture” as a result of the charge.**

A jury at Blackfriars Crown Court took 90 minutes to clear Mr Pearson of the charge of “sexual assault by penetration”, the Mail on Sunday newspaper said.


 Sentencing him at Blackfriars Crown Court Judge Aiden Marron QC said Rashid should have been more "prudent" with his glasses

Blackfriars Crown Court in central London Photo: ALAMY

The CCTV did not conclusively prove there was any form of physical contact between the two strangers, but it still led to the CPS presenting a case that the man was able to penetrate the actress,

who is in her 60s.


In a three-day trial Mark Bagshaw, defending, said the allegation could not have taken place in the half-second time frame shown on CCTV, especially as Mr Pearson was carrying a newspaper in his left hand – the one he was alleged to have used in the assault – and holding his bag in his right.

 Mr Pearson seen on CCTV footage recorded at Waterloo Underground Station at 18:40:25


Mr Pearson seen carrying a bag and a newspaper on CCTV footage recorded at Waterloo Underground Station at 18:40:20

 Mr Pearson seen on CCTV footage recorded at Waterloo Underground Station at 18:40:24

Mr Pearson seen with his right hand on his bag strap on CCTV footage recorded at Waterloo Underground Station at 18:40:24

 Mr Pearson seen on CCTV footage recorded at Waterloo Underground Station at at 18:40:25

Mr Pearson seen passing the woman on CCTV footage recorded at Waterloo Underground Station at 18:40:25

 Mr Pearson seen on CCTV footage recorded at Waterloo Underground Station at 18:40:26

Mr Pearson seen on CCTV footage recorded at Waterloo Underground Station at 18:40:26

Mr Pearson told the court: “I would have had to crouch down, put my hand up the woman’s skirt... penetrate her, take my hand out again... all while holding the newspaper and walking along the concourse.

“It’s preposterous.

“It is against everything I believe in as a human being. I did nothing.”

“None of us believed for a second that he was capable of doing what this woman said.”

Carol Ho, Mr Pearson's partner

There were no witnesses, no forensic evidence and the actress failed to pick out Mr Pearson in an identity parade of video images following the alleged incident in December 2014.

The actress was wearing a coat and jacket and a thin dress over “training pants” following a yoga class, the jury heard.

Mr Pearson, who was traced by police from his Oyster travel card records, told the newspaper: ““One of the many frightening aspects is that this could have happened to anyone.

“For me, half a second turned into a year of hell. I feel I have undergone a form of mental torture sanctioned by the state.

"It is just bizarre.”

His partner Carol Ho, 41, said: “None of us believed for a second that he was capable of doing what this woman said.”

The case raises further questions about the CPS’s decision-making in sexual assault cases, which has been under intense scrutiny following a series of failures.

A CPS spokesman said: “There was sufficient evidence for this case to proceed to court and progress to trial. We respect the decision of the jury.”

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