

WOMAN LOSES 'WITCHES

IN WOOD' LIBEL CASE

Daily Telegraph, October 13th 1961.

JURY DECIDE IN 20 MINUTES

A JURY took 20 minutes to decide in the High Court yesterday that "Rex Nemorensis—King of the Woods" did lead a coven of witches in a night ritual in a Surrey wood.

Mr. Justice MELFORD STEVENSON accordingly dismissed with costs a libel action by Miss MARY CARDELL, 54, who said that although an article in a London newspaper did not name her she was identified as "Beth, the Witch Maiden," one of the witches.

The costs are estimated to total £5,000. The defendants, the *Evening News*, who published the article complained of in March, 1961, had pleaded that it was true.

The article complained of was headed, in different editions, "Witchcraft in Wood" and "Devil Worshipers by Night in Surrey Wood."

LIVED WITH "BROTHER"

Writer on occult

Miss CARDELL, of Dumbledene, Charlwood, Surrey, told the court that for 30 years she had lived on a brother and sister basis with Mr. CHARLES CARDELL, 74, psychologist and writer on the occult. Both denied taking part in any ceremonies in a wood near their home or that they believed in witchcraft.

Mr. WILLIAM HALL, the reporter who wrote the story, said he could positively identify the couple as two of 12 hooded figures who took part in a "sinister" ritual in the wood.

Miss CARDELL had also claimed £6,000 special damages—saying that after the article was published a businessman friend reduced a legacy to her from £8,000 to £2,000.

'SOMEWHAT ECCENTRIC'

Judge's summing up

In his summing up, the JUDGE said it was suggested that in order to "win his spurs" Mr. Hall had fabricated the story.

"It would be rather startling to find a young man of intelligence producing an utterly untrue story realising that there was a considerable risk of this sort of case," commented the judge.

Of the Cardells, he said: "On any view of the matter they are somewhat eccentric people, are they not?"

"The suggestion on one side is that Mr. Cardell was a man dedicated to the investigation and pursuit of some form of witchcraft and who set himself up as an adviser to people who had been adversely affected by it. It is a strange story, is it not?"

Mr. Cardell had explained his "strange writings" by saying he wished to contact those who

might be suffering from excessive damage because of the occult.

"But" said the judge, "If you think the explanation which has been offered is merely a cover for the practice and performance of a number of rites and rituals in which Mr. Cardell may have had a certain commercial interest it may help you to some extent when you come to make up your mind where the truth lies between the flat denials of the Cardells and the story told by Mr. Hall."

"You have Charles and Mary Cardell saying this is a wicked fabrication and nonsense and that no ritual ever took place in their wood and that the reporters are deliberately lying."

If they had suffered damage from an untrue story then an appropriate amount of damages should be awarded. "But if you think the whole case put forward by Miss Cardell is really a packet of nonsense you should find for the defendants," he added.

After a 20-minute retirement, the jury, which included two women, returned and found for the newspaper. Miss CARDELL was ordered to pay the costs.

After the verdict, Miss and Mr. Cardell packed away into a hold-all two red-and-grey cushions on which they had been sitting. They had brought them to court themselves: otherwise they would have had to sit on the hard wooden benches. Neither would comment as they left the court.