

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE

Claim No. HQ09X02319

QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION

B E T W E E N:

BARRY GEORGE

Claimant

and

(1) MGN LIMITED

(2) TINA WEAVER

(3) DAVID JEFFS

Defendants

STATEMENT IN OPEN COURT

Gordon Bishop, Counsel for the Claimant

My Lord, the Claimant, Mr Barry George, has brought this action against the Defendants, MGN Limited, Tina Weaver, the editor of the Sunday Mirror, and David Jeffs, the Assistant Editor of The People, in respect of a number of articles which were published about him in The Mirror, the Sunday Mirror and The People in October and November 2008.

Mr George is well known because of his wrongful conviction in July 2001 (by a majority verdict of 10-1) of the murder of the TV presenter Jill Dando, who had been shot dead on the front steps of her London home in April 1999. In November 2007, after a long campaign to prove his innocence led by his sister, Michelle Diskin, the Court of Appeal set aside his conviction and ordered a retrial. On 9 June 2008 the retrial started at the Old Bailey and on 1 August 2008 the jury by a unanimous verdict acquitted him of the murder.

In an article entitled "Dando Case Barry George Stalks Nurse" which appeared in the Sunday Mirror on 5 October 2008 it was alleged that Mr George had harassed and stalked a nurse in London leaving her deeply disturbed and scared. The Sunday Mirror and its editor, Tina Weaver, now accept that the allegation that Mr George had harassed and stalked a nurse was without foundation.

In an article entitled "Barry George Downloads Pics of TV Kay" which appeared in The People on the 12th October 2008 the newspaper falsely alleged that Mr George had become obsessed with Sky TV presenter Kay Burley, who had interviewed him after his acquittal, and that Mr George had, contrary to the rules of the hostel where he was staying, downloaded pictures of her onto his computer which he had smuggled into the hostel as a result of which the computer had been confiscated from him. Similar allegations were also published by the Daily Mirror on its website on the 12th October 2008.

In a subsequent article headed "I love Kay and she loves me" published in The People on the 19th October 2008 the further false allegation was made that Mr George was obsessed with Kay Burley and that he had claimed that he loved her and she loved him. The article of the 19th October also falsely claimed that Mr George had illegally attempted to obtain drugs from a hospital by fraudulently claiming to be someone else.

In yet a further article in The People on the 2nd November 2008 it was claimed that Mr George had become obsessed with another TV personality, the X Factor judge Cheryl Cole, and was threatening to pester and harass her and those working with her so that he could meet her.

The Defendants now accept that all those allegations were false and apologise to Mr George for having made them.

The Defendants are here today by their solicitor to withdraw publicly the false allegations they made and to apologise to Mr George for making them. They have also agreed to pay him substantial damages and his legal costs.

Solicitor for the Defendants

On behalf of the Defendants I confirm what my learned friend has said. The Defendants take this opportunity to correct matters and to apologise to Mr George for any hurt and distress he has felt.