

Statement in open court

Counsel for the Claimant:

I appear on behalf of the Claimant in this matter, Mr Tom Sanders and my learned friend appears on behalf of the Defendants.

This statement is made in libel proceedings brought by Mr Sanders against the Defendant, Hodder & Stoughton Ltd who, in 2007, published a book entitled 'Mummy's Witness' by Mr Sanders' daughter Gayle Sanders. The book sets out a tale of a harrowing childhood filled with unimaginable terror and makes the most horrific allegations against Mr Sanders, including the extremely serious allegation that he sexually, emotionally and physically abused Gayle from the age of four and that, over a period of many years, he regularly and viciously abused Gayle's mother, Sue Sanders. The book claims that Gayle lived in a house where unimaginable violence and cruelty could erupt at any moment, describing her home as "a place ruled over by my father with his unpredictable and monstrous behaviour".

My Lord, all these allegations are completely untrue and Mr Sanders maintains there is no evidence to substantiate them and that, contrary to the picture painted in the Mummy's Witness book, Gayle's relations with her father were entirely happy. Mr Sanders has evidence in the form of letters and documents which support his version of events, in stark contrast to the picture painted by Gayle in the book. Indeed, throughout the book there are examples of events being described in a way which is inconsistent with these letters and documents. Mr Sanders claims that the versions of the events that appear in the book are completely false.

The allegations, as may be imagined, have caused Mr Sanders and his other children, Christine and Michael, a huge amount of damage and distress, particularly in light of the fact that Hodder & Stoughton failed to contact him prior to publication of the book. However, he is pleased to have reached an agreement with the publishers that allows him the opportunity to set the record straight and under which Hodder & Stoughton are to make donations to Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund and the Fire Fighters Charity and to meet his legal costs.

Counsel for the Defendant:

The Defendant published Gayle's story in good faith and Gayle firmly stands by it. As an established publisher Hodder & Stoughton supports its authors. Without a full trial it is not possible to resolve where the truth lies. However, Hodder & Stoughton accept the existence of the letters and documents relied upon by Mr Sanders. Hodder & Stoughton note that there are often two sides to a story and accept that the book does not put forward Mr Sanders' version of events. They are pleased that the amicable settlement of this action has avoided the distress which litigation would inevitably have caused to all involved.

Hodder & Stoughton apologise to Mr Sanders for the distress caused to him and other members of his family and his brother's family by the publication of the book.

Counsel for the Claimant:

My Lord, in these circumstances, I need only ask for leave to withdraw the record.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be 'James'.A large, stylized handwritten signature in cursive script.