

SEMLEY COMMON ACCIDENT 1934

East Knoyle Labourer's Leg Broken

Dangerous Driving by Shaftesbury Lady

A Shaftesbury lady motorist was charged at Tisbury Sessions on Thursday with driving a car in a dangerous manner and without due care and attention. Defendant was Miss Lettice G Partridge of 25 Coppice-street, Shaftesbury. She was represented by Mr W Farley Rutter and pleaded not guilty to the careless driving.

Mr Taylor (Bristol) prosecuting, described the offence as an insane and impossible act. Miss Partridge, he said, was driving an MG sports car from Shaftesbury towards Warminster across Semley common. She overtook a saloon car while it was passing two cyclists and crashed into one of the cyclists, whose leg was broken and his cycle smashed.

Henry Charles Snook, a labourer, of East Knoyle, who came into court on crutches, said he was riding his cycle behind his friend. They were not side by side. The small red car was coming at about 50 miles per hour. As witness was passing the saloon car, the red car shot in between them and struck witness on the right leg. He was thrown off the bicycle on to the grass and the impact tore out the back wheel of his cycle. The red car ran 14 or 15 yards across the Common before it stopped. A gentleman and lady got out of the red car and came up to witness. They gentleman said to the lady "How did you come to do it?" and the lady said "I really don't know how it did happen". A gentleman also got out of the saloon car. Witness was in Shaftesbury Hospital for two months and two days and he now had to go to Bristol Hospital as the leg was not setting properly.

Cyclist Companion's Comment

Albert James Hull, of East Knoyle, who was riding with Snook, gave similar evidence and said he had passed the saloon when the MG swerved out. Cross-examined, he said the saloon car did not slow up as it approached them. "We did not know it was a lunatic driving" he said, "or we should have got off". We did not know till afterwards".

William Edward Mounsey of Hoylake, the driver of the saloon car, said he was travelling at 35 mph and on approaching the cyclists he slackened speed. He heard a bumping behind and, looking back, saw the MG car bumping across the Common.

PC Winchcombe produced photographs and a plan of the scene of the accident. He found Snook with a broken leg, lying at the side of the road. On the road, a brake mark commenced 6ft 9ins from the offside, continued for 23ft 6ins and then in a curve for 43ft to the offside bank, and then for 45ft over the greensward to where the car came to a standstill. This indicated that the car was travelling at a high speed. Miss Partridge, in a statement to witness, said the car in front slowed up and she had to jam on her brakes because of the cyclists. The offside front wing and lamp of the defendant's car were damaged. Cross-examined, he agreed that it appeared that the braking was uneven, only one wheel being properly held.

The Defence

Mr Rutter said, had the saloon car not slackened speed, which Miss Partridge did not anticipate, the cyclists would have passed the saloon car before her car reached them. When she braked she found her brakes were not working properly and it was afterwards found that a connection had broken. Possibly she was not driving with the degree of caution necessary.

Miss Partridge said she was travelling at about 40mph, not very much faster than the saloon car in front. She thought the cyclists would pass the saloon car before she got to them. She thought there was room for her to pass between the cyclists and the saloon car, but she did not clear the cyclists. She saw no sign that the saloon was going to slow up.

Car Difficult to Control

Hugh Duncan Goldney Grey of Love Lane Shaftesbury, a passenger in the car, said the brakes definitely did not operate properly and this made the car difficult to control.

The Bench convicted in the case of dangerous driving. They imposed a fine of £10 and ordered defendant to pay £8 0s 3d costs. They endorsed and suspended her licence for a year.

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