



Alfred Frederick Harris

After a five hours' hearing at Devizes Police Court on Wednesday, Alfred Frederick Harris, Loughton, Essex, was committed for trial at the next Wilts Assizes on charges of alleged manslaughter and dangerous driving. Pleading not guilty, he reserved his defence and was released on bail on a personal surety of £50.

The case was a sequel to a distressing accident at Seend on Christmas morning, the victim being Mrs Louisa Nash, who resided at Martinslade, Seend. Mrs Nash, who was 39 years of age and the mother of four young children, was returning from Seend Churchyard where she had placed a wreath on her father's grave, when it was alleged she was knocked down by the defendant's car and so seriously injured that she died at Devizes Hospital the same day. The deceased woman was a sister-in-law of Mr Clifford H Ellis, head gardener at Cran Hill Hotel, Weston, Bath.

Mr W Ireland, Bristol, appeared for the prosecution, and Mr S H H Humphries represented the defendant. Mr Ireland described the scene of the accident, which, he said, was not witnessed by a third party. It was on the Devizes-Trowbridge road at a spot known as Seend Green House corner. Mrs Nash was seen cycling in the direction of Devizes and at that time she was on her correct side. A witness saw Mrs Nash and her bicycle being carried on the body of defendant's car across the road in the direction of a wall. Evidence would allege that, prior to the collision, defendant drove to the extreme wrong side of the road. The Bench would be told that he mounted the curve on his wrong side; that prior to that there were brake wheel marks in the road 15ft 5in in length, and that they were 8ft in on the wrong side of defendant's white line.

The car then travelled on to the off-side pavement, in a half circle for a distance of 74ft. It next left the pavement and no further marks were made for a distance of 79ft, at the end of which the car mounted the kerb on its near side, travelling on that side for 107ft. For 68 feet the car was undoubtedly in contact with a high wall and was seen tearing the ivy from the wall as it went along. Somewhere in its course of 275ft, the car collided with the bicycle ridden by Mrs Nash, who was found close to a door in the high wall into which the car ran. The bicycle was found on the grass verge, some little distance further on. In the course of an examination of Mrs Nash at Devizes Hospital, a car mascot was found embedded in one of her arms. Such was the force of impact with which she had been struck, that the mascot had gone three

inches into her arm.

In a subsequent test of defendant's car, it was discovered that the slightest application of the hydraulic brakes locked all four wheels, and in reply to a question put to defendant by Supt Meaney, defendant was alleged to have stated that, prior to the accident, his car had been in perfect order.

Evidence was given by PC Gosling (Trowbridge) who described the road marks at the scene of the accident. PC Haslehurst (Chippenham) who produced photographs of the scene and of the vehicles involved. Dr C S Rivington (Devizes) who attended Mrs Nash at the hospital, and Miss Peggy Margaret Runce, Sell's Green, Seend, who spoke to seeing the deceased shortly before the accident. Ernest George Nash, deceased's husband, a GWR employee, said his wife was in good health when she left home. John Frost, Yeovil, aircraft draughtsman, said that as he was walking down Seend Street, he heard a terrific crash and a moment or two later a car came round the corner, on the nose of which were a person and a bicycle. Going back he saw a woman lying on her back near the wall slightly on the Devizes side of the door.

To PC Potter (Seend) defendant was alleged to have stated; "She was looking towards that house." Defendant then walked a few paces to the road and, pointing towards the West gateway of Seend Green House, continued; "I thought she was coming from there. I tried to avoid her." Michael Petty, Devizes, motor engineer, said most of the damage to defendant's car was on the near front side. There were traces of brick on the wing. He tested the brakes and steering apparatus, which were satisfactory. An alleged statement made to Supt Meaney (Trowbridge) by defendant was given, in it he stated; "The car was in perfect order. I had no trouble whatever with the brakes or steering gear, either before or at the time the accident."

Addressing the Bench, Mr Humphries, for defendant, contended that no jury would convict defendant on either charge on the evidence put before them. After a brief retirement, Mr H Sainsbury (chairman) announced the Court's decision. Also sitting on the bench were Mr John Gale and Capt B H Cunningham.

Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette Saturday 2 April 1938

William Frederick Lawson Harris (46), company director of Loughton, Essex, was acquitted at Wiltshire Assize at Salisbury last night of a charge of the manslaughter of Louisa Nash at Seend on Christmas morning.

He was also acquitted of a charge of driving a car to the danger of the public. The prosecution alleged that Harris came round a bend too fast, got on the wrong side of the road and collided with the cycle on which Mrs Nash was riding.

Harris stated that in taking the corner he discovered the woman on his side of the road. He swerved to avoid her, but she served back to her proper side and there was a collision. The car travelled on because he had received a blow on the head which made him incapable of controlling the car.

Western Daily Press Friday 3 June 1938