

Index to Early Court Cases

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Two by Twos Against W. D. Wilson et al

Revised December 6, 2022

INDEX TO EIGHT COURT CASES

Filed against Wilson Dennis Wilson
by Friends and Workers
7 cases filed in England; 1 case filed in Ireland

NOTE: Copies of Wilson's libelous propaganda against Friends and Worker of which these cases filed for damages may be viewed in the [TTT Photo Gallery](#).

[Read Ed Cooney's Statement for Court Case \(#1\)](#)

[Read Wm. Irvine's Statement for Court](#)

1910

The first case was filed in England by Charles Thomas Partridge in 1910.

(1) Case No. unknown: *Charles T. Partridge v William Dennis Wilson and William M. Allen* (Filed in 1910 in England).

Plaintiff: Charles T. Partridge was a timber and iron Merchant in Stowmarket, Co. Suffolk, England, where he resided. The Partridges were probably converts of the Two by Two Sect.

Defendant: William Dennis Wilson was the owner of Rookery Farm in Cretingham, Framlingham, East Suffolk, England.

Defendant: William M. Allen was the writer, proprietor and publisher of the newspaper called the "*Independent*," located on Foundation Street in the town of Ipswich, Co. Suffolk, England.

Outcome of *Partridge v Wilson* (settled out of court): On **October 18, 1910**, W. D. Wilson published a public apology to Mr/s Charles T. Partridge of Stowmarket, England in a newspaper in Suffolk Co., England, the ***East Anglican Daily Times***: "I hereby acknowledge and admit that I have for several months been printing, publishing, writing, and circulating letters and documents of a libelous nature, reflecting upon the moral character and integrity of Mr. Partridge. I further admit the charges against him contained therein are absolutely untrue and without foundation in fact. I also undertake to pay his legal charges, and also the costs of publishing this apology in such local newspapers as he may select"

No further details were found regarding this action.

1911

1911: Two brothers, John J. West and William H. West, of Ballinamallard, Co. Fermanagh, filed four very similar lawsuits for libel in England against W. D. Wilson and the publishers of Wilson's propaganda. The explanation by a local newspaper was "It is clear that the Messrs. West brought this action simply and solely for the purpose of vindicating their own character and that of the religious body to which they belong (*Fermanagh Times* **Nov. 1911**, *TTT*).

1911 Four Claims by West Brothers:

Case No. 238: John James West v. William Dennis Wilson (Filed January 23, 1911 in England)

Case No. 239: John James West v. William Dennis Wilson, James W. Wilson and William M. Allen, publisher of the Ipswich newspaper called the "*Independent*."
(Filed January 23, 1911 in England)

Case No. 240: William Henry West v. William Dennis Wilson (Filed January 23, 1911 in England)

Case No. 241: William Henry West v. William Dennis Wilson, James W. Wilson and William M. Allen, publisher of the Ipswich newspaper called the "*Independent*."
(Filed January 23, 1911 in England)

Plaintiff: John West was a farmer, residing at Crocknacrieve, Co. Fermanagh, Ireland (convention site). He was also a rate collector employed by the Fermanagh County Council.

Plaintiff: William West was the Assistant Secretary of the Fermanagh County Council; Secretary to the Fermanagh County Committee of Agriculture; Secretary to Fermanagh County Committee of Technical Instruction; and Income Tax Collector.

Defendant: W. D. Wilson. Two actions were filed against him personally, as he falsely and maliciously wrote and/or caused to be printed and published certain handbills, pamphlets, telegrams and letters that greatly injured the credit and reputation of the West brothers and caused them to suffer much annoyance, public scandal, hatred and contempt. Some of these were enclosed in a letter to their employers.

Defendants: James Wilson and William M. Allen, proprietor of the "*Independent*" newspaper that was published in Ipswich, and printed Wilson's libelous propaganda.

Wilson claimed the West brothers were guilty of a criminal offense, were aiders and abettors in the prostitution of women and girls, were concealing and harboring criminals from justice, had been leading instruments in the procuring of 50 girls for immoral purposes, resided in and kept a disorderly house, had thereby obtained a large sum of money and for purposes of gain consorted with procurers and procuress of women; and were unfit to hold the office of rate collector or any other such office. The **November 1911** *Fermanagh Times* newspaper reported regarding Wilson's activities in 1911:

"Subsequently, he [W. D. Wilson] issued large numbers of leaflets and pamphlets in that he made many serious charges against the moral character of the new movement and its members, accusing them, amongst other things, of inducing young girls to leave their homes and go away to other countries for certain unlawful reasons. This system of denunciation having proceeded for a length of time, and growing more virulent in its character, **Mr. John West, Crocknacrieve, and Mr. W. H. West, Mullaghmeen**, members of the religious sect in question, brought an action for libel against the author, and after the lapse of a considerable length of time and many communications between the legal gentlemen representing the respective parties, the matter has at length been settled by Mr. Wilson paying £100 damages and all costs, and unreservedly withdrawing all his assertions, and publishing a full and ample apology for having made them."

Outcome of the above (4) cases (settled out of court): A public apology was published by William D. Wilson, James W. Wilson, and William M. Allen, the Writer, Proprietor, and Publisher, respectively, of the *Independent* newspaper at Ipswich, England. Defendants agreed to pay £100 damages, all costs, and consented to Perpetual Injunctions. "There is no doubt that had they persisted in bringing the matter into Court, a judge and jury would have awarded them much larger damages than those they have accepted" (*Fermanagh Times* **Nov. 1911**, TTT).

November 11, 1911 Public Apology published by W. D. Wilson, James W. Wilson, and William M. Allen, of 40, Foundation Street, Ipswich, the Writer, Proprietor, and Publisher, respectively, of the newspaper called *The Independent*, at Ipswich, England

Impartial Reporter December 18, 1913: Mr. Eames said that in November, 1911 an action brought against Mr. Wilson and the proprietors of the *Ipswich Independent* (a newspaper) **was settled in chambers**, Mr. Wilson paying damages and costs, and an apology was advertised in *The Daily Mail* "of most ample kind." (Ipswich is NE of London; Ipswich Independent is/was their newspaper; *The Daily Mail* is a London newspaper.) It was also reported that "plaintiffs had recovered £50 damages and costs at the Bristol Assizes for a placard hung outside a shop in Somersetshire" (the county or shire of Somerset is in the south west of England, near Cornwall and Devon).

Fermanagh Times January 14, 1912: Mr. John West, Crocknacrieve, and Mr. W. H. West, Mullaghmeen, members of the religions sect in question, brought an action for libel against the author, and after the lapse of a considerable length of time and many communications between the legal gentlemen representing the respective parties, the matter has at length been settled by Mr. Wilson paying £100 damages and all costs, and unreservedly withdrawing all his assertions, and publishing a full and ample apology for having made them.

1912: Joseph Burfitt, aka Joey Burfitt, was the owner of Goodedge Farm, Bruton, **Co. Somerset**, England, where the Go-Preachers held a convention each year. Two of his eleven children, Escort and Rosalie Burfitt, were Workers. In 1912 they held a ten-day convention at the farm from June 14 to 24, with some 200 people in attendance, with over 100 staying in **Burfitt's** farm house and buildings (*Western Daily Press* **July 12, 1913**, TTT).

1912

(6) Case No. 2110: Burfitts (3) and Carter v. Hayward and Mainstone (Filed June 27, 1912 in England).

Plaintiffs: Joseph Burfitt, father of Escort Alfred Henry Burfitt and Rosalie Ellen Mary Burfitt and Frederick Carter filed an action against Rev. Douglas. Llewelyn Hayward and Richard Mainstone. During the Somerset convention held on Burfitt's property, a lengthy article ran in the newspaper criticizing and ridiculing the sect. Also, "while the 1912 convention was sitting, the members learned that the following leaflet was being exhibited, by the instruction of the Rev. D. L. Hayward, vicar of Bruton, on a notice board outside the barber's shop of Mainstone, one of the most conspicuous spots in the village (*Impartial Reporter* **July 17, 1913**, TTT).

Plaintiff: Frederick Carter of Burham was a master wheelwright (built or repaired wooden wheels) in whose home a fellowship meeting had been held for the past seven years. Carter also housed some convention attendees at his place in the village. His business suffered from Wilson's propaganda.

Defendants: Rev. D. L. Hayward (vicar of Bruton) had asked **Richard Mainstone** to exhibit in a glass frame outside his barbershop a leaflet printed by W. D. Wilson accusing the Go-Preachers of engaging in white-slave trafficking and procuring women for prostitution under the cloak of religion. A document titled: "A Grave Warning" signed by Overseers in twenty parishes and All the

Overseers in Ipswich stated: "We being the overseers of the poor in various parishes in Suffolk, England, feel it our duty to warn every man, woman and child against countenancing, or in any way encouraging those men and women who come amongst us and call themselves by various names, such as "Go-preachers," "No Sect," "No Church," &c. and endeavour to entice away our children especially our young girls under the cloak of religion. Many girls have been induced to leave their homes to their great distress and sorrow... The content of the leaflets and warnings brought the most hideous charges that could be brought—namely procuring women under the cloak of religion. This leaflet was signed by upwards of forty church wardens. He posted this without inquiring of any of the signatures, because there was no time—the convention was drawing to a close." (*Impartial Reporter* **July 17, 1913, 8**, TTT)

The meaning was that each of the Plaintiffs were accused of criminal offenses and were engaged in procuring young girls and women for immoral purposes under the cloak of religion, and that this could be proved by the overseers of twenty parishes and by letters from girls who had been victims of Plaintiffs. Due to this, Plaintiffs were very much aggrieved, annoyed, suffered persecution, damage to their honor and reputations and had been subjected to public odium and contempt. They were afraid to go to the market.

William Irvine made a written Statement for this case and also testified verbally: "The convention at Brewham 1912 lasted from June 14 to 24. About 200 people attended the meetings. I was shown a leaflet on the 21st by Howard Burfitt, such as was said to be posted in Bruton outside the barbers shop occupied by Mr. Maidstone [Mainstone] . This caused me to understand some of the language I had overheard from some of those who came to look on, rather than hear what was said in meetings. I heard two women say 'Old Burfitt ought to be burned,' and other remarks that made me wonder at their hostility, as we are not accustomed to those things in other places" (Irvine **1913, Statement**). During this court proceeding "**William Irvine, one of the founders of the Go-Preachers Society, said it was Protestant evangelical;**" Irvine also stated, "**I have never known of a new sect being founded without opposition**" (*Impartial Reporter* **July 17, 1913**).

Outcome of Burfitt v Hayward (settled in court): "Certain members of a singular sect known as the 'Go-Preachers' brought a libel action at the Bristol Assizes [England], and were successful in obtaining £50 damages... The jury returned a verdict for plaintiffs, and awarded them £50 damages" (*Impartial Reporter* **July 17, 1913**, TTT; Bristol is due west of London; assize is a court session).

1913

The People Ltd of London July 14, 1912 printed an article which became the basis for a libel suit brought against The People, Ltd. by **Ernest Walter List** of Debenham, near Stowmarket, Co. Suffolk (convention ground owner) and **Edward Cooney** seeking damages for their injured reputation and a restraining injunction from further publishing. List and Cooney won. (Stowmarket is NE of London, near Ipswich; *The People Ltd* is a weekly London newspaper)

(7) Case No. 323: Ernest Walter List and Edward Cooney v. The People, Limited (Filed February 14, 1913 in England).

Plaintiff: Edward Cooney sued because the libel was titled "The Cooneyites" and because the article indicated that the Plaintiffs were engaged in White-Slave Trafficking for the purpose of sending women and girls abroad for prostitution under the cloak of religion.

Plaintiff: Ernest Walter List was a farmer and a carrier and the owner of the convention at **Debenham**, located near Stowmarket, Co. Suffolk, England, the same county where W. D. Wilson resided. List's complaint was that he was described as the "Bishop of Suffolk" in the sect.

Defendant: The People, Limited, publishers of a weekly UK newspaper called "*The People*."

Previously, the Go-Preachers had moved around rural Suffolk at various times holding missions. In 1912, one of the most prominent tradesmen of the town, Ernest Walter List, the carrier, hosted a convention on his property.

"Rural Suffolk is in a ferment, caused by the singular doings of the Tramp Preachers, **who have established themselves** in the county...and have now fixed their headquarters at Debenham, near Stowmarket...he [W. D. Wilson] has redoubled his crusade, and the countryside is plastered with bills and posters that provide much reflection for the thoughtful and merriment for the rustics" (*People of London* **July 14, 1912**, TTT).

Outcome of List and Cooney v. The People Ltd (settled in court December 11, 1913): "His Lordship...said the defendants were satisfied that with regard to Mr. List and Mr. Cooney there were no grounds for the charges that they led a movement which led, designed or otherwise, to the kind of immorality suggested, and that having been satisfied that Mr. List's and Mr. Cooney's characters were perfectly clear they consented to judgment in the action in accordance with the terms stated" (*Impartial Reporter* **Dec. 18, 1913**, TTT; *Irish Independent* **Dec. 12, 1913**, TTT). Judgment was entered for the plaintiffs for £100 damages and £50 costs. See verdict also in *The Irish Independent* for **December 12, 1913, p7**

The judge, Justice Darling asked Ed Cooney, who was under oath: "Were you the founder of this sect?"

Cooney replied: "No, William Irvine was the first, about 16 years ago. I cast in my lot with him as a fellow-preacher, and preached a good deal in the north of Ireland. I recognise the name, but others have nicknamed us 'The Cooneyites.' I do not like it myself" (*Impartial Reporter* **Dec. 18, 1913**, TTT).

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**(8) Case No. 2164: Edward Cooney v. William Dennis Wilson and William Henderson** (Filed April 17, 1913 in Ireland).

**Plaintiff : Edward Cooney** objected to libelous posters, placards and literature published, printed and posted in Fermanagh Co. referring to himself and to "Cooneyites."

**Defendant: William Henderson's** occupation was bill poster employed by auctioneers and others to post bills in the town of Enniskillen. He lived with his father, wife and four small children. Henderson was hired and instructed by W. D. Dennis to post various libelous placards, bills, pamphlets, leaflets, posters and sandwich boards with warnings about the Cooneyites in Fermanagh Co., Ireland. Henderson took no steps to defend himself and allowed the matter to go to default. He stated, "I verily believe that the Plaintiff's sole object in joining me as a Defendant in these proceedings was to enable him to proceed against the Defendant W. D. Wilson in the High Court of Justice of Ireland."

**Defendant: W. D. Wilson** named about 40 Cooneyite members in his propaganda material, but did not name the West brothers who had sued him previously in 1910. Wilson tried very hard to get this case moved to England where he lived, but was not successful as Henderson lived in Enniskillen and had distributed the libelous material in Ireland on behalf of Wilson. He also tried to get the order reversed, but failed.

**Outcome of Cooney V. Wilson and Henderson (settled out of court):** "The defendant had now agreed to withdraw the plea of justification and to admit there was no foundation for the statements and to undertake not to repeat them. It was also agreed that all proceedings in the action should be stayed and to pay the plaintiff's taxed costs...ordered that all further proceedings in the action be stayed save as to the taxation of costs and the necessary enforcement as to the payment of same" (*Freeman's Journal*, **Dec. 23, 1913**, *TTT*).

**NOTE:** World War II began in 1914 and Wilson fell on hard times, and didn't pay the settlement. Cooney filed a Judgment in the case, which Wilson failed to pay also. On March 1915 a Summons under Courts Emergency Powers Act was filed on Mr. Wilson for non payment of Judgment for £191:1:9. Available documents show all but £ 6:15:5 was paid by April 19, 1915. (Balance may have been paid also.)

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1912, November: Parliament Investigation: The sect achieved considerable notice outside the *Impartial Reporter*. The accusations and cases had attracted such negative publicity from W. D. Wilson's white-slavery charge that it generated an Oral Question in the UK House of Commons session in 1912. Mr. G. Fetherstonhaugh, who asked the question was a House of Commons M. P. Rt. Hon. A. Birrell, K.C., M.P. and the Chief Secretary and Keeper of the Privy Seal for Ireland, replied: "The police inform me that there is no truth in the statement that Enniskillen is a centre of the White-Slave Traffic" (*Parliamentary Debates*, 1912, Great Britain. Parliament, House of Commons, 10th vol. **Session 1912, 2063-4**, *TTT*.)