JURY HEARS OF WITCHES' CHANT

By GUY RAIS

A POISONOUS brew from laburnum seeds was boiled in a pot and poured into a bottle to the witches' chant in "Macbeth" — "Hubble bubble, toil and trouble" — a jury heard yesterday.

In the dock at Winchester Crown Court, wearing black capes and crucifixes, were ROSIE SWALE, 31, yachtswoman and TRACEY STAMP, 46, former merchant seaman, who had a sex-change operation 20 years ago, both of Chapel Vestry House, Penffordd, Dyfed.

Both denied administering a poison, cytisine, from laburnum seeds, to KEITH VINCENT, 36, Miss Stamp's former boy friend. They also denied perjury and attempting to pervert the course of justice.

Stormy relationship

Mr ROGER TITHERIDGE, Q.C. prosecuting, said that Miss Stamp and Vincent had lived together "on and off in a stormy relationship." Then they met Mrs Swale. After her marriage had broken down in 1978 she and Miss Stamp moved to a house near Guildford.

DAILY TELEGRAPH 17th FEB. 1981

Earlier Vincent had suffered stomach pains. But an internal examination revealed nothing wrong.

"The prosecution says his symptoms were not caused by illness, but by the two defendants who had been administering cysisine, a little-known poison, not to kill him or cause serious injury, but to keep him out of the way from causing any trouble."

Vincent had given a High Court undertaking not to pester Miss Stamp, but they tried to get him sent to prison alleging he had broken the terms of the order by sending a wreath and a message of condolence to Miss Stamp. "It was a put-up job by both women."

Details of a confession Mrs Swale was alleged to have made in a letter were read to the jury.

"As a woman driver is blamed for an accident so a witch is always blamed for being a poisoner. But because Tracey is a witch much higher than I she has been accused with me. I and I alone know I am guilty."

The letter also said that Mrs Swale tried to get Vincent sent to prison by making it look as if he had broken the court undertaking. "I thought I was so clever, so famous and well-known that I would get away with it."

The hearing was adjourned until today.

TIMES 17th FEB. 1981. 3.

Yachtswoman and friend on poisoning charge

Rosie Swale's sex-change friend Tracey Stamp chanted "hubble bubble toil and trouble" as she boiled up poison to give her boyfriend, a jury at Winchester Crown Court was told yesterday.

Mr Roger Titheridge, for the prosecution, read extracts from a letter written by Miss Swale, the round-the-world yachtswoman, which said both she and Miss Stamp, who had a sex change operation 20 years ago and who appeared in the court writ as "Bernard (otherwise known as Tracey)", were witches.

The women, of Chapel House, Pen-ffordd, Dyfed, deny administering poison to Mr Keith Vincent, with intent to injure aggrieve or annoy him; attempting to pervert the course of justice; and perjury.

Mr Titheridge said the women had not intended to kill Mr Vincent, but merely to "keep him out of the way". In a letter written by Miss Swale, aged 31, before she attempted to kill herself, she had claimed that she alone was responsible.

"As a woman driver is always blamed for an accident, so a witch is blamed for being a poisoner. Because she is a witch much higher than I am, Tracey has been accused with me. . . ."

But Miss Swale had made the statement to "shield and protect Miss Stamp". The pair had also plotted to get Mr Vincent jailed for breaking an undertaking not to pester them.

They arranged for a wreath to be sent to Miss Stamp, aged 45, as if it had come from Mr Vincent and bearing the words: "Love to my wife Tracey, from Keith".

Mr Vincent had been given the poison cytisine, from the Laburnum tree. It had been administered in a pepper grinder and a glass of milk.

The trial continues.

Poison trial judge says that the press 'deserve boiling in oil'

From Our Correspondent
Winchester

Mr Justice Michael Davies criticized the press at Winchester Crown Court yesterday during the trial of Miss Rosie Swale, the yachtswoman, and her friend Miss Tracey Stamp.

He said the press deserved a medieval punishment, and added: "I won't say what the press deserves except that they deserve boiling in oil".

He made his comment after he had been told that Miss Stamp's former lover, Keith Vincent, a Southampton docker, was paid £2,000 by *The People* newspaper for his story and an exclusive picture of Miss Swale and Miss Stamp together.

Mr Vincent, aged 36, who claims that the two women laced his food and drink with poisonous laburnum seeds, admitted selling his story to the newspaper in October, 1978.

Questioned by the judge, Mr Vincent replied: "I have received on one occasion, and one occasion only, £2,000 when I sold my story to *The People*. It is rather like in court. They ask questions and then write a completely different angle to it."

The judge then made his remarks about boiling the press in oil.

The judge made other remarks earlier after Mr Vincent claimed that Miss Stamp took a wreath from his grandmother's funeral and nailed it on the door of an old man's house in Burley in the New Forest. Mr Vincent said Miss Stamp had argued with the old man and claimed that she had put a curse on him.

The judge said that that was the sort of thing which "makes reporters' pens wag".

He continued: "They are only interested in this and not the facts of the case. I am going to find out before the case is over whether the court is being manipulated by the press or whether the press in being manipulated by the parties. I do not like the flavour of this case at all."

At the start of the day's hearing yesterday the judge held up a copy of the *Daily Mail* which carried the opening of the trial, and complained about what he called the inaccurate headline.

After reminding the jury that he had warned them at the outset of the trial to avoid reading about the case or listening to it on television, or radio, he said: "I am very disappointed with the press. They cannot stick to what is said exactly in court. If there are any more inaccuracies then I shall take action. The arm of the law is very long."

the TIMES WED 18th FEB. 1981

At the end of Mr Vincent's evidence the judge said he would release him on condition that he did not speak to the press or television during the trial.

He added: "I am not going to have interviews with you splashed all over the papers. In this country we have trial by judge and jury, not trial by the newspapers or television."

Mr Vincent had earlier told the jury that he was violently ill for weeks while living with the two women in West Road, Woolston, Southampton. On that occasion, in September 1978, Miss Stamp and Miss Swale had both prepared the dinner.

He continued: "The portions looked similar, so I picked up one of the plates and went into the lounge to watch television. The other two picked up their meals and we all ate together. I did not suffer any illness, but Tracey did. She had all the symptoms I had suffered."

He later told a friend: "I thought that one of them had eaten the wrong dinner, and perhaps they were poisoning me."

Cross-examined by Mr Anthony Palmer, QC, for Miss Stamp, Mr Vincent said he had always been amazed at the care the two women gave him when he was ill.

He added: "It was for that reason I could not have thought two people who were always so nice, so kindly, could be poisoning me."

Once, he said, Miss Stamp told him she had cast a spell and made him ill.

Miss Stamp and Miss Swale both deny poisoning Mr Vincent; attempting to pervert the course of justice by fabricating evidence; and perjury. They now live at Chapel Cottage Penffordd, Dyfed.

The trial continues today.

DAILY TELEGRAPH WED 18th FEB.

ILLNESS LED TO POISON SUSPICION

A DOCK worker said yesterday that he first suspected he was being poisoned by ROSIE SWALES, the round-the-world yachts woman, and her sex-change friend, TRACEY STAMP, after a meal at the home they shared.

KEITH VINCENT, 36, told Winchester Crown Court he found three plates, each containing a meal, at the house in Woolston, Southampton.

"The portions looked similar, so I picked up one of the plates and took it into the lounge. The other two also picked up the remaining plates and we all ate together. I did not suffer any illness, but Tracey did."

Later Mr Vincent told a friend: "I thought perhaps one of them had eaten the wrong dinner and perhaps they were poisoning me."

Wrote address

Miss Swale, 31, and Miss Stamp, 45, who underwent a sex change 20 years ago, both now living at Chapel Cottage, Penffordd, Dyfed, South Wales, deny administering poison to Mr Vincent with intent to injure, aggrieve or annoy him. They deny attempting to pervert the course of justice by fabricating evidence and perjury.

Mr Vincent, who was allowed to write down his address, said he first met Miss Stamp in 1974 and they lived in Southampton where in 1977 they met the Swale family. The Swale's marriage broke up, and in October, 1978, Mrs Swale and Miss Stamp left the house.

He had begun suffering from stomach pains in 1976 and the trouble continued until 1978. Mr Vincent claims the two women laced food and drink with laburnum seeds.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE