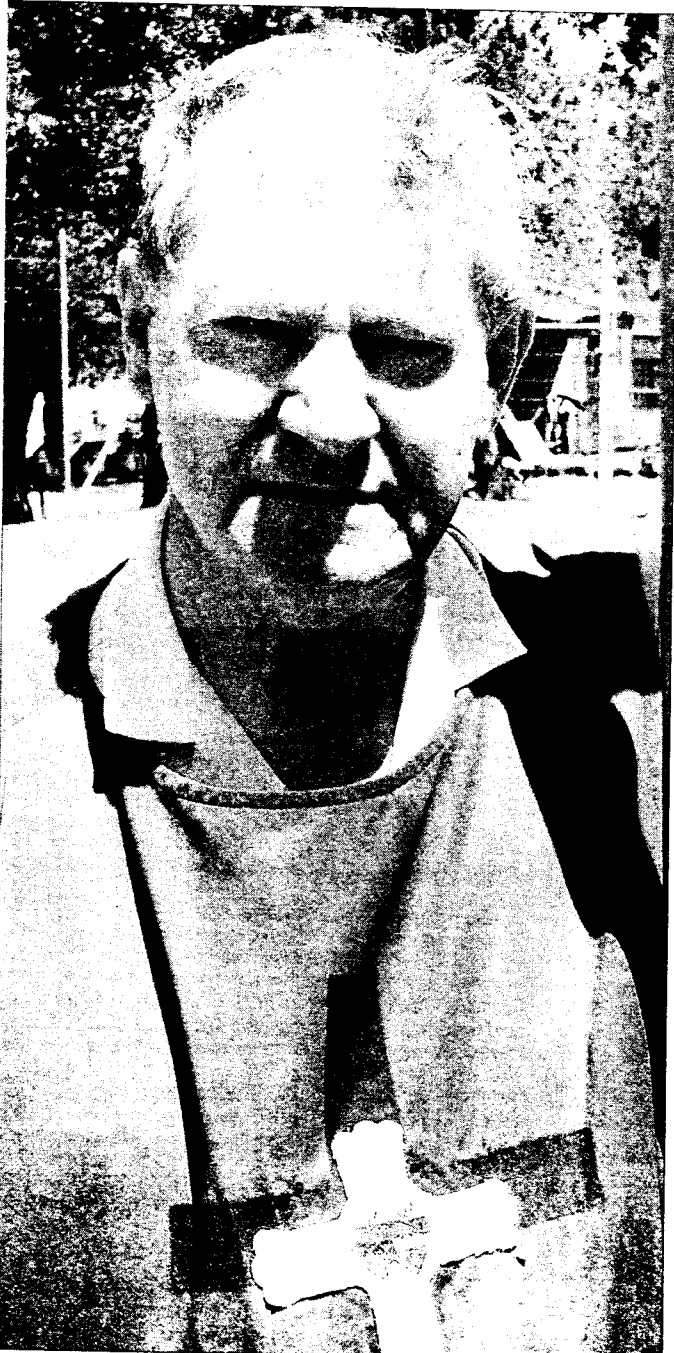


# Pebble's right-hand man cleared of sex charges



**FREE MAN:** Little Pebble's second in charge, James Duffy said he prayed for the souls of his accusers.

By **GLENN ELLARD**

ONE of the leaders of rebel religious community, the Order of St Charbel, in West Cambewarra, has been cleared of indecent assault charges.

Two charges of aggravated indecent assault levelled against James Charles Duffy, 73, were dismissed in Nowra Local Court on Wednesday after Magistrate Doug Dick concluded there was not enough evidence to convince the court beyond reasonable doubt.

During the hearing a woman claimed she was 13 and living in the community during the early 1990s when Duffy had twice kissed her passionately with an open mouth.

The first occasion was in the office area, while the second kiss, lasting about 30 seconds, allegedly occurred in a shed while Duffy was rubbing her bottom, the woman claimed.

Before the second kiss Duffy allegedly told the girl he loved her more than a father loved a daughter, the court was told.

Duffy denied the allegations, and told the court he did not recall ever even being alone with the girl.

The woman also admitted her rec-

ollection of the incidents was less than perfect.

"It's all very hazy - I was only a kid," she said.

She said she had also tried to suppress memories of her time in the community which she lived in after her family became involved several years earlier with self-styled religious leader William Kamm, also known as the Little Pebble.

Adding to the confusion was the fact that as a teenager the woman believed married men in the community having "mystical wives and princesses" was not unusual, the court was told by Paul Stanley, appearing for the Director of Public Prosecutions.

However cross-examination by Duffy's legal representative Roger Spain revealed inconsistencies in the woman's version of events, Mr Dick ruled.

He said it was not a case of believing one person over another, but in a situation where charges were laid several years after an alleged incident making it impossible for Duffy to call alibi evidence there was simply not enough evidence to prove the allegations beyond reasonable doubt.

## 'We prayed for our accusers'

RELIEVED at being cleared of indecent assault charges, James Duffy said he bore no animosity against the people who brought charges against him.

In fact he had been praying for the souls of all his accusers, he said.

"We just prayed for all our persecutors, praying for enlightenment that they would see the truth," he said.

Special prayer services asking that the justice system would actually find justice had even been organised at the Order of St Charbel's West Cambewarra community, Mr Duffy said.

While relieved he had been cleared of charges, Mr Duffy said he was also relieved the ordeal was over for the woman whose accusations resulted in the aggravated indecent assault charges being laid.

"The family's a good family," he said.

"I still pray for them because they're basically good souls."

Evidence during the court case revealed another person had helped the woman make the statement, Mr Duffy said, and he believed they had guided the woman in making the

allegations on which charges were based.

He questioned why an arrest would be made and charges laid in such circumstances.

"I just wondered why the charges were laid when the evidence against me was only two sentences in a brief."

Being subject to allegations and intense public and media scrutiny, including having the religious community continually labelled as a cult, "does place pressure on some very good souls".

Mr Duffy was arrested at the community during a police raid on August 8, after which Mr Kamm was also arrested.

Kamm is facing a committal hearing in Nowra Local Court starting on March 31, relating to charges of four counts of committing an aggravated act of indecency with a person under the age of 16, and four counts of committing an aggravated sexual assault on a person under the age of 16.

He has also been charged with inciting a person under the age of 16 to commit an aggravated act of indecency.