

Besley wins £54,000 from 'thief' Hynds

ANDREW BESLEY, the Cornish photographer who with the backing of the NUJ spent 10 years pursuing crooked former news agency boss Ted Hynds, has won £44,500 in damages over the theft of his pictures of a lifeboat disaster.

Awarding the sum, plus an estimated £10,000 in interest, Judge Ian Mackintosh said that Ted Hynds, former owner of Devon News Services in Exeter and until this summer a reporter with the *People*, was "a liar and a cheat and a thief."

As a freelance photographer based in St Ives, Andrew Besley had the "scoop of a lifetime" in the Penlee lifeboat disaster of December 1981, and Ted Hynds, to whom he had entrusted syndication of his exclusive pictures, had stolen the proceeds.

He had fobbed off Andrew Besley's attempts to recover his payment and his pictures with lies.

The judge told Truro County Court that the freelance "in the front line had to be protected from this type of operator like Hynds." He awarded the damages for breach of contract: the contract was based on trust and the case was "a very serious breach of trust".

The case took so long because Andrew Besley had accepted a settlement of £500 in 1985, because he could not challenge Ted Hynds' assertion that he did not have the pictures. Later they came to light after Devon News Services had changed hands.

With the backing of the NUJ Andrew Besley embarked on the long fight to get the case reopened, and in February this year succeeded (*Journalist*, April). Judge Mackintosh lifted the stay on the action, opening the way to the final hearing in September.

The NUJ has spent an estimated £80,000 on the case, and is now preparing to recover this from Ted Hynds who is now reported to be working in public relations in Thailand. Charges have been put on his properties.

Andrew Besley says: "I want to place on record my heartfelt thanks to the NUJ and enabling us together to achieve such an overwhelming victory.

"It is not just for me, it is for every freelance. The judge upheld the basic principles of freelancing, that it can only work on trust based on prior arrangement, which must be respected."

The judge had great praise for him. He said: "Mr Besley built up his case over years of the most detailed and patient work, and he made his case throughout with good humour, despite his anger and the enormous frustration. It was excellent!"

■ A MONTH after Andrew Besley's victory, his wife Beryl died. She had suffered from cancer for many years. The family had had to sell their house to fight the case and Beryl Besley had helped her husband with it, and had the satisfaction of living long enough to see it won.