

Man 'told police about jealous girlfriend before acid attack'

Steven Morris and agency

An engineer called police to report being harassed and blackmailed by his jealous ex-girlfriend three weeks before she threw acid over his face and body, a murder trial heard yesterday.

Mark van Dongen, 29, was left paralysed from the neck down, "grotesquely scarred" and all but blinded following the alleged attack by Berlinah Wallace, 48. He suffered 15 months of terrible pain before opting for euthanasia and dying in a Belgian clinic.

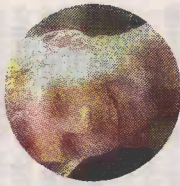
The jury at Bristol crown court has been told that Wallace attacked Van Dongen in the early hours of 23 September 2015. She is said to have been jealous that Van Dongen had begun a relationship with another woman and told him "if I can't have you, no one else can" during the assault.

Yesterday jurors listened to a 999 call Dutch-born Van Dongen made to Avon and Somerset police on 2 September 2015 complaining of harassment and blackmail at the hands of his ex-girlfriend and also alleging she was behind silent calls to his new partner.

In the first call, 16 minutes long, Van Dongen told the operator: "I split up with my girlfriend and she keeps calling me ... Now she's like blackmailing me."

Asked to explain the blackmail threat, Van Dongen replied: "She first kept on calling and crying and like hyperventilating and everything."

"When I left her to start off with, she tried to kill herself, she took a handful of



Mark van Dongen was left paralysed from the neck down, scarred and almost blind following the alleged attack by his ex-girlfriend

pills and she said like she would stab herself if I was going to leave her. Now she constantly keeps on calling me and now she just called me and she says like, I'm going to call the police, say that you downloaded child porn ... she keeps screaming."

He said his new girlfriend, Violet Farquharson, had been receiving silent phone calls, which he suspected were from Wallace. "Something needs to be done about it," he said.

The next day Van Dongen went to Trinity Road police station in Bristol and spoke to PC Katie Bettel.

The officer told jurors Van Dongen told her that he had been receiving unwanted phone calls and text messages from Wallace and alleged she had been making silent calls to Farquharson.

"I told him that I would make it very clear to Miss Wallace that it was unwanted contact and that if she continued to make contact that would be considered harassment," she said.

Colin Evans, a colleague of Van Dongen, said he had shown him scratches on his back which he alleged Wallace had caused.

"He used to say that she was abusive and he pulled up his top and showed me the various scratch marks on his back." He said Van Dongen told him "she's crazy" and the witness added: "I remember him saying that she threatened to kill him if he ever left her."

Wallace denies charges of murder and applying a corrosive fluid. She claims she thought she was throwing a glass of water at Van Dongen.

The trial continues.

11.11.17