

Son seeking pardon for Christine Keeler, woman at the heart of the Profumo affair



Christine Keeler, a model, was 19 when she met John Profumo, MP
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Jonathan Ames, Legal Editor

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Christine Keeler's son has appointed a QC known for her work in women's rights to seek a posthumous pardon for the Sixties icon by arguing that she was wrongly convicted of perjury.

The legal team plans to use reports in The Times to show that Keeler suffered discrimination because she was a woman, and that she would not have been convicted today.

Keeler, a model, had an affair with John Profumo, MP, in 1961 when she was 19. The scandal nearly brought down Harold Macmillan's Conservative government in 1963.

Keeler was sentenced to nine months in prison after she was found to have committed perjury and obstructed justice in the trial of Lucky

Gordon, a former boyfriend. She had been advised to plead guilty to avoid a harsher sentence.

Lawyers acting for Keeler's son, Seymour Platt, 49, will argue that her false evidence was not central to the trial and therefore should not have resulted in a perjury conviction. Felicity Gerry, QC, will press the lord chancellor to recommend that the Queen grant a posthumous pardon. The legal team would use a precedent set by the campaign for Alan Turing, the computer scientist, who was pardoned in 2013, she said.

The issues included whether Keeler had been “technically and morally innocent” and “whether her treatment was unjust and discriminatory”, Ms Gerry told The Times. It was “odd” that Keeler had been prosecuted for perjury “when she was subjected to a violent assault and lied about who was present, not about being assaulted”, she added.

“In those days court reporters often transcribed whole proceedings,” Ms Gerry said, adding that Times reports were being scanned for evidence.

“Perjury requires proof of a material lie. These days prosecutors are not keen to prosecute women who are victims of violence.”

The campaign will argue that the trial of Stephen Ward, the osteopath who had introduced Keeler to Profumo and killed himself after being found guilty of living off immoral earnings, had drained her. Keeler had “carried the public moral opprobrium for the conduct and downfall of privileged men”, Ms Gerry said. “A posthumous pardon is an opportunity to acknowledge historic discrimination and the legacy for women today.”