

NIGHTMARE OF RAPE ACCUSED

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A SUNDERLAND man found not guilty

Under current law, the names of those accused of rape may be published in the papers but not the names of alleged victims.

Peter Phillips, 43, of The Royalty, says he has been punished for something he did not do, even though Judge Helen Paling halted his trial at Newcastle Crown Court yesterday and directed the jury to return a not guilty verdict.

Judge Paling stopped the trial after hearing that Mr Phillips alleged victim went willingly with him to his flat and did not complain until after sexual intercourse took place. "We are not a court of morals," said the judge.

Speaking after the trial, Mr Phillips said he had suffered for a year since the alleged rape on New Years Day, 1998. "My name was on the front of the Echo that morning. Im divorced and my kids found out their dad was accused of rape when they went down to the shop that morning to get the paper."

Mr Phillips added: "Ive barely spoken to them since. I dont blame The Echo, they have to print the news as they get it. But I do think those accused of rape should be entitled to some form of anonymity, at least until its clear the case is going to go to court.

"Ive spent time in Durham Jail and have had this hanging over me for a year. All for something I didnt do."

Mr Phillips admits sexual intercourse took place and that his behaviour would be seen as reprehensible by some.

"I made a moral mistake, but that is all," he said. "Everyone who knows me knows Im not capable of doing what they said, and Id like to thank everyone for standing by me.

"Im unemployed at the moment and I think I lost out on at least one job because I had to tell my prospective employers I was involved in this case.

"Whatever people say, just being accused of a crime counts against you. Ive another job interview on Friday and Im hoping I can now put all this behind me."

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