

THE IRISH TIMES

Woman sentenced for false claim of rape

Sat, Oct 24, 1998, 01:00

A mother of eight children who made a false rape claim using a photofit description of a soap opera star received a suspended two-year jail sentence yesterday.

The woman, Mary Darcy (45), St Cronin's Avenue, Swords, pleaded guilty at Dublin Circuit Criminal Court to making a false report to gardai.

Gardai had spent three weeks looking for the alleged assailant. Eventually it emerged that the description she gave "strongly resembled" Craig McLachlan, the former star of the Australian soap opera Neighbours, Judge Cyril Kelly was told.

Judge Kelly said that he had never seen Neighbours and had no intention of ever seeing it, but this case was serious as the description could have matched any member of the public.

The investigating detectives realised the rape report was false when it was discovered the woman was being transported to hospital as a result of a massive drinking bout at the time of the alleged offence. Det Garda John Ryan said that, by coincidence, another garda had seen Darcy in an extremely drunken state on the night of the alleged rape. She told him she was all right and he continued walking. At 11.45 p.m., the time of the alleged rape, the garda saw her being placed in an ambulance at Talbot Street in the city centre.

Det Garda Ryan said that on February 18th, 1997, he confronted Darcy and told her he did not believe her story. She confessed the truth, saying she had made up the allegations because she feared the consequences of telling her boyfriend that she had been drinking all day with another man.

Pleading for leniency, Ms Marie Torrens, defending, said that her client's drinking problem was so bad that she was awaiting a liver transplant in Beaumont Hospital.

Judge Kelly said that false complaints were a great disservice to women who had been raped and were undergoing great distress.

Imposing the suspended sentence, he said that in the light of Darcy's health problems there was little point in sending her to jail, provided she complied with the directions of the probation service.

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