

staples ANOTHER SHAFT MEMBER AND NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTOR, VANESSA OF STOKE-ON-TRENT, FOUND HERSELF THE SUBJECT OF A LOCAL NEWSPAPER ^{NEWS ITEM} ~~ARTICLE~~ IN THE "STAFFORDSHIRE EVENING SENTINEL"

4 played 'prank' on sex op. man

FOUR youths who played a "prank" on a friend who was undergoing a sex-change operation were slammed by a Stoke-on-Trent magistrate today.

The Chairman of the Bench, Mr. George Staples, told the four: "You cannot help but feel sorry for these sort of people but having to

take it out on them in this way is despicable."

Mr. Jeff Stanway, defending, told the court that the four, Michael Richardson, Martin Potts, Gary Jewess and Richard Smith, had been discussing the operation in the pub.

"They were all offended by this matter," he said. "They decided they were going to play a prank on him."

But the matter got out of hand when they reached the former friend's house at Middleport.

Richardson, 27, of Central-drive, Blurton, and Potts, 19, of Moorside-road, Trent Vale, admitted smashing a window.

Dismissed

Jewess, 27, of Murhall-street, Burslem, and Smith, 26, of Longton-road, Trentham, pleaded Not Guilty and their cases were dismissed.

Mr. David James, prosecuting, said that Richardson had thrown a brick.

"He had been spurred on by the operative treatment the injured party was undergoing. He was sickened and offended by it," he said.

All four were bound over to keep the peace for 12 months in the sum of £100. Richardson and Potts were fined £75 each and ordered to pay £11.50 compensation and £25 costs each.

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VANESSA WRITES: "ALTHOUGH THEY CLAIM TO HAVE BEEN FRIENDS OF MINE, I ONLY KNOW ONE OF THEM BY NAME AND HE WAS A MERE ACQUAINTANCE. IT SEEMS THAT I AM TO GET NO COMPENSATION FOR EITHER THE EMOTIONAL OR MATERIAL DAMAGE INVOLVED - THE POLICE ONLY SEEMED TO BE INTERESTED IN THE COST OF REPLACING THE GLASS (AND THAT WILL BE GIVEN TO THE INSURANCE COMPANY). THEY DIDN'T EVEN LET ME KNOW THAT THE TRIAL WAS HAPPENING. A FRIEND POINTED OUT THIS ITEM IN THE PAPER AND IT IS ALL I KNOW ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED IN COURT."

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20th SEPT 85.