

# Neighbour from hell guilty of breach

EADT 02 October 2008



Michael Cornwell

A NEIGHBOUR-from-hell who has made the lives of those living near him a misery was yesterday found guilty of breaching a court order.

Following a two day trial at Ipswich Crown Court, 55-year-old Michael Cornwell, was convicted of blocking his neighbours' driveways in defiance of a court order.

The jury of eleven women and one man heard claims from Cornwell, of Back Lane, Monks Eleigh, that the restraining order which had been granted by magistrates at Sudbury in March 2003 had been lifted.

But that was not the case, said Simon Spence, prosecuting, and when Cornwell blocked access to neighbouring properties with his Rover car for up to an hour at a time he was flying in the face of the order.

Cornwell's arrest came after neighbours, who had tried without success asking him to move and then photographed his car on their property when he refused, contacted the police. The offences took place between February 22nd and March 27th this year, the court was told.

In his defence Cornwell claimed that it was his understanding that when he appeared in connection with another matter at Ipswich Crown Court in January a judge had lifted the order but was unable to produce any documentation to support that claim. Cornwell told the jury that he did not consider he had done anything illegal and that in his view the restraining order was no longer effective.

He claimed that if he had on occasions parked his car so that a neighbours drive was blocked it had only been for a few minutes and not as long as had been alleged.

After the jury returned a unanimous guilty verdict, Judge Peter Thompson ordered the preparation of a pre sentence report on Cornwell by the Probation Service. No date has been set for sentencing and Cornwell remains on bail.

For those living in Back Lane, the past six years have been shrouded in fear and torment at the hands of Michael Cornwell.

The 55-year-old has lived in his cottage for more than 30 years. Difficulties first surfaced in 2002 when Cornwell was given a suspended prison sentence for threatening neighbours. At that stage, his lawyer, Kevin McCarthy, described Cornwell as “round peg in a square hole”.

Neighbours were reluctant to speak out yesterday, with one explaining they feared retribution despite Cornwell being found guilty. It is also understood some of Cornwell's neighbours had moved away from Back Lane because of their problems living in near him.

Clive Arthey, ward councillor for the area with Babergh District Council, said he was unaware that problems had resurfaced.

Mr Arthey, who has met with Cornwell in the past to discuss his concerns, said: “He needs help. He's not just a bad person he is an ill person and have sympathy not with his actions but with his problems - there are problems behind it. He is ill.”