

# Innocent man is freed after 'rape victim' confesses

BY MICHAEL HORSNELL

A MAN serving six years in prison for rape has had his conviction quashed by the Court of Appeal after his "victim" withdrew her allegations and confessed to misleading the court.

John Griffin, 35, said after being freed: "I was totally innocent but my life has been wrecked. I've lost my girlfriend, a good job, and at one time even my own family wanted nothing to do with me. I would never have believed this nightmare could happen to an ordinary man. It has been a terrifying and devastating experience."

Mr Griffin, a former quality control inspector from Mossley, Greater Manchester, had served three months in Strangeways when he received a letter from his so-called victim. He said: "She told me she was sorry for what she had put me through and would put matters right."

The Crown Prosecution Service said yesterday that the 18-year-old woman whose allegations led to his conviction had been charged with perjury

and with attempting to pervert the course of justice. She will appear before Trafford magistrates on October 17.

Mr Griffin, who says he lost his good reputation as well as his freedom when he was convicted and sentenced at Manchester Crown Court earlier this year, added that his status as a sex offender attracted constant threats from other prisoners.

Before winning his appeal before Lord Justice Roch, Mr Justice Forbes and Judge Pownall, QC, last week, he reached a point of despair at which he considered suicide. He faces losing his house because of debts and added: "I've not had a word of apology or a penny piece in compensation from anybody for what I've gone through." He had protested his innocence throughout his trial.

"It's a wonder I ever got out at all," he added. "One report to the court, based on a 20-minute interview, concluded I was a dangerous man and should be detained for a long time."