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FRIENDS' HELL OVER FALSE RAPE CHARGES

By **Gordon Robertson**

TWO lifelong friends have spoken of their living hell after being falsely accused of rape.

Close pals Jason Duncan and Chris Hoey from Airdrie had their names cleared when they were acquitted at the High Court in Falkirk earlier this month.

It took a jury just one hour to find them not guilty of the unfounded accusations that were first made in March last year.

But for the two young men the torment they have gone through will take much longer to pass.

Speaking to the Advertiser yesterday, Jason (22), from Gartness, said: "This has been the worst thing that has ever happened to me.

"It has been terrible to live through this and I want people to know that the court found us not guilty and we would never do anything like that.

"Our friends and family stuck by us and knew we were innocent, although we found out who our real

friends are. It felt absolutely amazing when the verdict was given but the whole ordeal has had a terrible impact on our lives.

"Both of us are going to counselling to cope with what happened."

Chris, who was arrested at his workplace, said: "I have found this whole thing impossible to deal with.

"I hardly knew this woman who accused me of raping her but she has ruined my life.

"For an innocent man to be branded a rapist is the worst thing that could happen to anyone."

Both Jason and Chris were invited back to the woman's house in the Gartlea area of Airdrie after a night out in Glasgow.

The next day, Jason went to work but his nightmare began when CID officers turned up later at his home to arrest him.

The innocent men were charged and remanded to Addiewell prison.

When cons at the West Lothian jail found out what they were accused of, it became clear their lives were in danger.

Jason said: "They set fire to paper and tried to push it under the door, urinated through the door and threw boiling water at us.

"At one point we were attacked as 30 prison officers tried to get us back to our cell.

"A-mini riot broke out. It was terrifying."

While Chris was released from Addiewell after 10 days, Jason spent a YEAR in prison on remand.

He was moved to Barlinnie and shared a prison block with some of the country's worst sex offenders including members of Scotland's worst-ever paedophile ring.

At one point he was the only remand prisoner in there and struggled to cope.

He said: "There was one guy who had been convicted of a similar charge to the one I faced but was appealing it.

"If it hadn't been for him I don't think I would have coped.

"We looked out for each other and I helped him with his appeal.

"It is hard to put it behind you but I



STANDING TOGETHER: pals Jason and Chris had to endure the stigma of a false rape allegation.

am trying. I would like to thank all those people who didn't doubt our innocence.

"And I would also like to thank Bob Cochrane and the fellowship group at Barlinnie for the help they gave me."