

Conviction And Appeal - 10.06.19

Man convicted of Hastings street rape.

A man who viciously attacked and raped a young woman he met in Hastings Old Town in the early hours of the morning is now facing justice as result of a police investigation which tracked him down within hours with the help of swift forensic analysis.

Luke Smith, 27, a labourer of no fixed address, was convicted at Hove Crown Court on Friday 7th June after a five-day trial.

He was remanded in custody for reports, prior to sentencing on 12th July.

Smith, who had been drinking on his own in Hastings town centre, saw 19-year-old woman as she was on her way home after a night out in the early hours of Saturday, 15th December 2018. He took her to a secluded part of West Hill near to the West Hill cafe, and subjected her to an horrendous ordeal, repeatedly raping her and striking her, including hitting her over the head with a rock.

The victim managed to escape only after Smith eventually became distracted looking for his mobile phone.

Detective Inspector Ben Newman from the Hastings Safeguarding Investigations Unit said; "We were told about this horrific attack early that morning and immediate enquiries identified the scene. Here our CSI team found a hooded cord which was sent for forensic analysis to a laboratory. Luke Smith's DNA was found on the cord and also our victim's blood.

"As a result we were able to quickly arrest Smith and during a search of his bedroom, we found a t-shirt, hooded jacket (minus cord) and jeans. Each item had the victim's blood on.

"In addition, Smith's DNA was found on the victim's bra. We also found Smith's blood and the victim's DNA on a sandstone rock close to the scene. Following consultation with our colleagues at CPS, Smith was subsequently charged and remanded into custody five days later. I am so pleased that justice has been served for this brave young woman and that Smith has been taken off the streets.

Detective Sergeant Steve Shimmons of the East Sussex Safeguarding Investigations Unit said; "This is the most violent rape that I have ever investigated. Smith initially lied to us about his involvement in this matter. His account changed over time and he tried to suggest in court that he had consensual sex with the victim and did not attack her. The jury in this case saw through his lies and have rightly now convicted him of this terrible offence.

"I want to commend the courage of the victim in supporting our investigation and giving evidence in person at the trial, with specialist support measures and help through the Independent Sexual Violence Advisory service.

"Stranger attacks of this type are very rare. We always carry out swift and thorough

investigations of all reported sexual assaults and we are glad that justice has now been done for this young woman."

Appeal Can You Help?

Sussex Police are appealing for witnesses after a man suffered facial injuries in a Bexhill assault.

The victim, a man in his 20s, was walking along Church Street towards Chantry Lane, Bexhill, around 2am on Monday (June 3rd) when he was assaulted by two men.

He suffered cuts and bruising to his face and received medical treatment at the scene. Officers would like to speak to anyone who witnessed the assault. You can report information online at <https://www.sussex.police.uk/contact/af/contact-us/> or by calling 101 quoting 105 of 03/06.

Help Us Keep Sussex Safe

Seen something suspicious or have information about a crime or incident? Please contact us at <http://www.sussex.police.uk/contact-us/>, email us at 101@sussex.pnn.police.uk or call 101.

Alternatively you can contact the independent charity **Crimestoppers**, anonymously, on 0800 555 111, or online at www.crimestoppers-uk.org