

Man Found Not Guilty of City Jewellery Theft



A Waterford man accused of the armed robbery of diamonds rings valued €81,700 from a City Centre jewellery shop was found not guilty by the direction of the trial Judge Pauline Codd in Waterford Circuit Criminal Court last week.

Jamie Coughlan (34) with an address at No 256, Larchville, Waterford, had been charged with robbing Martina Waters of a quantity of jewellery at Briscoe Conway Jewellers, Broad Street, Waterford, on July 9th, 2011 and producing a knife during the robbery capable of inflicting serious injuries in a manner likely to intimidate.

At the close of the prosecution case on the second day of the retrial, Judge Codd directed the jury of eight women and four men to return a not guilty verdict.

The retrial was directed by the Court of Criminal Appeal when it quashed the conviction of Jamie Coughlan, who had been jailed for seven years for the knife point robbery.

Judge Tom Teehan imposed the jail sentence in November 2011 when Jamie Coughlan was found guilty by a jury in Waterford Circuit Criminal Court of the robbery of the 48 diamond engagement and eternity rings. He denied the charges.

In his opening speech to the jury, Noel Whelan, BL, for the DPP, said the jewellery store was robbed at 10.10am and two shop assistants were threatened with a knife.

Jewellery valued at €81,700 and a small amount of cash were robbed and the raid was captured on reasonable quality CCTV in the shop.

There was no dispute about the robbery and the only issue that needed to be verified was who perpetrated the crime, he said.

After the raid the shop assistants pressed the panic button and the raider took a certain route and discarded a 'hoodie' and put on different clothes.

CCTV footage gathered from the Bridge Street area and several other areas showed the accused man hanging around the city centre before going to the jewellery shop.

In evidence, Aisling Murphy, one of the two shop assistants, said she was hovering the shop floor when a man in a dark woolly hat and wearing thick glasses came up to her side.

She stopped hovering and looked up and saw he had a knife and pointed it at her. The man was dirty and unshaven and smelled of alcohol and cigarettes. He demanded money and asked for gold and she took trays of gold rings and put them in his bag.

The man threatened to "poke out" her eyes unless she stopped looking at the panic button and then said he would lock them in a back room. During the raid which lasted seven minutes she was in fear for her life.

The second shop assistant, Martina Waters said when she came down stairs the man turned towards her and was brandishing a knife with an eight inch blade. He said he wanted diamonds and cash. He brought them into a back room and she opened the safe.

When leaving the he warned them not raise the alarm for 10 to 15 minutes and said somebody was watching the shop outside. He threatened that if he was caught he would come after them in 10 years when he got out of jail.

The proprietor of the jewellery shop, Declan Conway said he was informed of the robbery while at another shop in the centre and he ran to the store.

He found the two shop assistants in a state of distress. Jewellery valued at €81,704.48 (gold rings) and €60 in cash had been robbed.