

Man jailed following DoneDeal deception

A man who deceived an innocent couple into purchasing a stolen car has been jailed for three years. Mr Michael O'Donnell, with an address of Cool na Nave, Mitchelstown, County Cork pleaded guilty at Waterford Circuit Criminal Court to 12 counts of indictment including gainful deception, possession of stolen property and possession of false documents including back to NCT and tax disks.



On June 15th, 2016 a Mr Thomas Martin responded to an advertisement on DoneDeal for a blue Audi car. Mr Martin met with the accused, Mr O'Donnell on June 16th at Bolton Street car park, and furnished the sum of €8,550 for the car. When submitting his logbook to an Garda Síochána, Mr Martin discovered the Audi had in fact been reported stolen, and the registration plates, NCT disc and tax disc were falsified.

Detective Garda Mark O Riordan told the court how the accused had used a "sophisticated level" of organisation to pass the stolen car off as legitimate. The accused used DoneDeal to find a seller with the same make and model car as the stolen vehicle; he then had plates and discs made with this car's details, and applied for a logbook using this seller's name. "There was a level of sophistication here," Detective Garda O'Riordan told the court. "He ascertained all details necessary to provide false documents."

He said details of the same make and model were gathered to help pass it off. "Even when an innocent buyer does check, they're doing it on information of a clean car." Following a search of the accused's home in Mitchelstown, Gardaí also recovered a Volkswagen Passat bearing false plates and discs, a cash sum of €1,690 as well as documents falsified using a number of aliases held by the accused. In his victim impact statement Mr Martin described the level of distress the deception had caused to him and his partner. "After the day of the sale our whole lives were turned upside down," the statement read. "We were so disappointed that this had happened to us." The couple suffered a financial loss of €9,050 in total.

Defence for the accused Conor Roberts BL indicated his client had raised a sum of €5,050 to compensate the victims for their loss, and is willing to forfeit the sum of money seized at his home also. Although Mr O'Donnell had 43 previous convictions, BL Roberts indicated these were non-violent offences and a Probationary Report had assessed the accused to be at a low risk of reoffending. In submitting his sentence Judge Eugene O'Kelly took into account the accused's guilty plea, as well as his stable relationship, part-time employment and favourable probationary report. Mr O'Donnell was sentenced on all 12 counts and received a jail term of three years, with a sum of €2,500 to be repaid to the victim over the course of four years upon his release.