Eddie Stobart's son tells how his life has been hell since he was wrongly accused of rape

By JAMES TOZER FOR THE DAILY MAIL UPDATED: 23:47, 12 June 2008

The son of former haulage boss Eddie Stobart yesterday told how his life had been made hell since he was wrongly accused of rape by a 15-year-old girl.

Edward Andrew Stobart, 19, said he had been beaten up and told to 'dig his own grave' following the case.

His trial collapsed after it emerged that the alleged victim had drunk so much cider that she could not remember what had happened.

Sporting two black eyes and cuts to his face, the teenager backed calls for those accused of rape to be given anonymity unless they are found guilty.

'My life has not been worth living for the past month since the case finished,' he said. 'I am too scared to go outside on my own.

'I think it is worse because people know who my family is and that my dad is Edward Stobart.'
The teenager, who is known as Andrew and is the adopted son of Mr Stobart, was accused of raping the girl in woods near his home village of Houghton, near Carlisle, in April last year.

The trial at Carlisle Crown Court was told she had been drinking with friends until she passed out, awakening to find Stobart having sex with her in a churchyard. He denied the claim.

The case was thrown out last month after Judge Paul Batty QC called the girl's evidence 'deeply flawed', pointing out that she had spent time with him the day after the alleged attack and even exchanged text messages with him.

Footage shot earlier on a mobile phone showed her falling over drunk in a park, and the trial heard that she later had to ask friends what had happened.

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But although the prosecution was abandoned, she retains her anonymity, unlike Mr Stobart, who says he was attacked by a 15-strong mob at the weekend.

'It's not the first time I have been beaten up, I have been told to dig my own grave – it's horrible,' he said.

'Every time I go out I am shouted at and I have been spat at and called names like "Scum".

'I don't think it is fair that someone who accuses another of rape is given anonymity even if it is proven that it did not happen.'

The teenager is in hiding and says he cannot get a job because of the allegation.

His father founded the haulage company which bears his name in the 1970s and at one point the family fortune was put at £60million.

The fleet of lorries with their red and green livery became something of a national institution, with the policy of giving each truck a female name helping to attract a 35,000-strong fan club.

However Eddie Stobart was bought out by his younger brother William in 2003 and no longer plays any part in the business.

Andrew Stobart and his three sisters were adopted by Mr Stobart and his wife Sylvia, the haulage boss's former secretary.
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The couple are divorced and Andrew said yesterday he had little contact with his adoptive father.

Mr Stobart, 53, moved to Warwickshire and now has a new partner and a young daughter.

Life-long anonymity for victims of alleged rape or sexual assault was introduced in the 1970s.