

Taxi driver fined for refusing to drive customer home

A taxi driver has been prosecuted under an ancient law and forced to pay £715 after he refused a fare.

By Sarah Knapton

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Brian Hawksworth, 69, was taken to court under Victorian legislation from 1847 for refusing to take a woman on a half mile trip.

Passenger Alexandra Lewis, 66, had asked him to take her from Barnstaple train station in Devon to her house nearby but he said no - because it was too close.

Despite the fact she was carrying two suitcases he told her it would be cheaper to take the bus and she later reported him to the council.

He was charged with "refusing without reasonable excuse to drive a passenger to a place of their choice and thereby ignoring the cab rank principle".

Hawksworth pleaded guilty at North Devon Magistrates Court for the offence on July 26, given a £350 fine, £350 costs and a £15 victim surcharge.

Alexandra told the court: "I left the station carrying a bag and I went to the taxi and approached the first driver I saw.

"I was very apologetic because I knew it was such a short distance. He said 'don't be ridiculous, you can get a bus'. I was shocked."

Hawksworth, of Bickington, Devon, said she would have saved money by catching the bus for 30p rather than pay the cab fare of £4.

But prosecuting solicitor Trevor Blatchford said hackney cab drivers must take jobs "whether they like them or not".