

Case 1

February 2006

Donald Reynolds
A & E Pettifer Ltd
7 High St
Bromyard
Herefordshire
HR7 4AA

Tel: 01885 483409

Also trading as www.gollyshop.co.uk

A visitor to Bromyard complained to the police about the dolls.

Police called the owner of A & E Pettifer's, Mr Donald Reynolds, just as he was sitting down to Sunday lunch, and ordered him to attend his general store. An officer entered the shop and 'arrested' three gollies in the window and took them into custody.

Worcester racial equality council said the sale of golliwogs could cause offence. "It may lead to a worsening of race relations," said a spokesman.

Following a two-week investigation and consultation with the Crown Prosecution Service a spokesman said that no action would be taken against Mr Reynolds.

The golliwogs were returned to the shop and the owner was given "suitable advice about the sensitivities of placing such items on display".

West Mercia police said they had acted under Section 5 of the Public Order Act. It outlawed the display of offensive material, which might cause or was likely to lead to alarm, harassment or distress.

Neil Tipton, for Herefordshire Police, had said previously that the golliwogs would shortly be returned to Mr Reynolds and a letter would be sent out to the shopkeeper advising him about the sensitivity surrounding the controversial dolls.

Mr Reynolds said, "It's certainly nothing racist. I have a lot of friends who are black, Asian and Indian. It didn't even enter my mind that I might be committing a public order offence by having them in the window."

Case 2

March 2007

Gavin Alexander
In Touch
Hall Lane
Wrightington
Lancashire

In Touch furniture shop has been open for five years and sells a variety of different items including tables, lights and chairs as well as decorative ornaments such as Buddhas and African statues.

A woman customer called police to complain that the golly-style dolls were racially offensive.

The next day two officers arrived and confiscated one 6in doll and one keyring. They took a statement from Mr Alexander and told him to remove the remaining gollies from sale.

The dolls were taken under the Public Order Act, which makes it an offence to display material seen as offensive.

Lancashire Police eventually said, "This incident was reported to us by a member of the public. No offences have been committed and it is no longer a police matter."

Mr Alexander said, "Surely the police have got more important things to do? It's cases like this that cause racism. The golly dolls are very popular collectors' items and we have sold them for about three years. In that time we have not received one complaint, until now. This was a complete waste of police time."

Case 3

June 2007

Chris Brown
Haregate
Leek
Staffordshire

Mr Brown had a gollywog toy on the front of his Land Rover Discovery which was photographed by police and taken away after someone complained that it offended them.

A spokesman for Staffordshire Police said: "We are investigating a complaint from a member of the community regarding an object which has been attached to a vehicle which has caused offence and distress to a local resident. Officers have visited both parties involved and the item has been seized while the investigation continues. This incident has been reported to us as a racist incident and the local neighbourhood policing team are currently investigating the complaint."

Chief Inspector Martin Evans, who is responsible for partnerships and neighbourhood policing in the North Staffordshire Division added: "Any incident believed to be of a racist nature is taken very seriously. We are member of PARINS (Partnership Against Racist Incidents in North Staffordshire) whose work is focused on the need to increase the reporting of racist incidents. We are committed to serving all members of our community and we work to ensure that everyone can live without the fear caused by racist acts. "

Mr Brown said, "This is not about race, it's about political correctness gone mad. In Leek we have about 40 nationalities, many of which are my friends, and we all get on great. Political correctness like this builds walls in the community. I always support the police in their job, but this does not gain public confidence in them, and was not very well thought-out. I am very disappointed and feel let down by their action. I have contacted my solicitors."