



- Home
- News
- Sport
- Contact
- Advertising
- Media Pack
- Guestbook

Please note this website is best viewed in a 1024 * 768 resolution | © East Lothian

- Home
- Latest News
- Latest Sport
- Contact Us
- Guestbook
- Advertising
- Media Pack
- Fish4Jobs
- Fish4Motors
- Alloa News
- Border News
- Clydebank News
- Dumbarton News
- Dunfermline News
- Greenock News
- Helens'burgh News
- Paisley News
- Peebles News
- Your Radio

Do you have a local story? editorial@eastlothiancourier.com

Thursday September 21, 2006

➤ Gardener jailed for four years By East Lothian Newsroom

PRINT FRIENDLY EMAIL THIS STORY

22/9/06

A GARDENER with a chain-saw who brought terror to neighbours and police has been jailed for four years by a "sympathetic" judge.

The High Court in Edinburgh heard that James Aitken, 33, was a decent, hard-working family man who had run amok as a result of a cocktail of alcohol and medication.

For some eight years he had been treated for depression and anxiety with a controversial drug seroxat and should not have been drinking. The court also heard that a terrified family barricaded themselves in a bedroom as Aitken sawed his way into their East Lothian home, cut up their furniture and sawed his way out again.



James Aitken

When police were called to the scene in Whitecraig, Aitken doused officers with petrol and threatened them by flicking his lighter before he was finally brought down by baton blows and CS gas.

Jailing the gardener on Tuesday, judge Lord Brodie noted that even though experts had examined the possible part played by seroxat it did not excuse what Aitken had done.

"It was a terrifying incident for all who were involved," said the judge, who added: "I cannot but be sympathetic for your situation." Solicitor advocate John Scott, defending, said that since the incident in the early hours of February 26 Aitken's family had become experts on seroxat and its effects.

They were trying to find an explanation for his bizarre behaviour.

Since being taken into custody Aitken's medication had been changed and a detailed diary kept by his wife showed a marked improvement in how he looked and felt.

In February he had been drinking at a family gathering and "may have succumbed to the particular cocktail."

The court heard that property developer Bruce Gifford, who employed Aitken as a gardener, was standing by him and had even offered to buy a house so that the family could move out of Whitecraig.

At an earlier hearing Aitken, of Whitecraig Avenue, admitted vandalism, culpable and reckless conduct, breach of the peace and assault. The court heard details of his rampage during which he sawed the wing mirror from a Ford Transit before torching the van.

He was also holding a running chainsaw above his head and saying he was looking for his wife before heading for neighbours Margaret and Patrick Glen where their two children – Liam, 11, and Joseph, 8 – were asleep. He flung a

Out every Thursday

Just 40p

All the local News
All the local Sport

in partnership with
fish4jobs

in partnership with
fish4cars

amazon.co.uk

BUY NOW

slab through the window, showering the bed covers with broken glass.

Fearing they were going to be killed, the terrified family barricaded themselves in the children's bedroom by placing a football table and punch bag across the door.

Police arrived to find Aitken in the roadway with his chainsaw which he swung as he approached the police car, before he doused the Transit in petrol and set it alight. As PCs John Neilands and Gordon Millar approached, Aitken swore and threw petrol towards them, splashing PC Neilands on the arms and legs.

Lord Brodie heard that drink and medication had also brought Aitken before the High Court in September 2000 when he was put on probation and ordered to carry out 200 hours unpaid work for assault and robbery, breach of the peace and vandalism.

Lord Brodie ordered that Aitken should be kept under strict supervision for two years after his sentence.

[» Email our Newsroom](#)

[» Telephone: 01620 822451](#)

[» Have YOUR say in our Guestbook](#)