

'My pervy neighbour blackmailed me'

Katie Shepherd was shocked to discover that her sleazy neighbour was her secret sex pest and a peeping Tom

Whenever mum-of-two Katie Shepherd receives a picture message on her phone, a flood of fear courses through her body.

The pretty 20-year-old is still reeling from the discovery that her neighbour Dougie Walls, now 30, stole naked pictures of her which he then attempted to blackmail her with. But it wasn't until police searched his flat that the true depth of his sexual depravity was discovered. He had been secretly filming other women, using a hidden camera.

'I can't believe that my neighbour turned out to be a complete pervert,' says Katie, from Witney, Oxfordshire. 'Those photos were only meant to be seen by my partner Jack and me.'

In November 2008, Katie and her eight-month-old son, Tyler, moved into the flat opposite Dougie and his girlfriend, Yazmine Davies. Straight away, Katie felt uncomfortable with how over-friendly Dougie was.

Her intuition was proved right when, after catching a glimpse of her in her underwear through her flat window, he asked her to text him a naked picture of herself.

'I was horrified. The thought of him seeing me in my bra and knickers made me cringe. I didn't want to cause trouble, though, so instead of confronting him about it, I just tried to stay out of his way.'

But creepy Dougie had other ideas. Whenever Katie left her flat, the unemployed father-of-two would be hanging around outside

waiting for her. He even listened in on her conversations.

'One day, I was outside my flat talking to a friend about a row I'd had with my boyfriend Jack, Tyler's dad. I was worried because there were naked pictures of me stored on his PlayStation, which I didn't want to get out. It was then that I noticed Dougie hovering nearby.'

Although the couple soon made up, shortly afterwards in November 2009, Jack's house was burgled and his PlayStation was stolen. 'My instincts told me Dougie was involved,' says Katie.

'He was forever knocking on my front door, asking to borrow this or that. He'd text asking what I was up to. Eventually, I started pretending I wasn't in, and even changed my mobile number.'

But Dougie wouldn't give up. A few weeks later, he told Katie he needed her new mobile number for emergencies. 'Stupidly, I gave

it to him. I was his neighbour, after all,' she says.

Days later, in February 2010, Katie's mobile beeped while she was alone in her flat. She opened the message and was horrified to see a photo of herself – naked.

'It was one of the pictures that had been on the PlayStation. I felt vulnerable, angry and horrified. I texted back: "Who is this? Why are you doing this?"'

When her phone started ringing, Katie answered it to hear the sound of heavy breathing. 'I started shaking. I felt violated.'

'Seconds later, another naked photo came through – with the message: "It doesn't matter who this is, I want more photos."'

'The sender wrote that if I didn't do what he wanted, he was going to show the photos to my neighbours. I was terrified. For all I knew, this person was



'I felt vulnerable, angry and horrified'

outside my flat, watching me.'

Realising the only place the photos could have come from was Jack's PlayStation, Katie asked the blackmailer if they had the stolen console.

'When he replied "yes", I knew it had to be Dougie,' she says. 'Everything fitted together. He'd already asked for pictures of me, and I was scared he'd overheard me saying there were photos on the PlayStation.'

'When I told Jack, he was fuming. I had to persuade him not to do anything,' says Katie.

The next morning, Katie went to the police, but they were unable to trace the number as it was from a pay-as-you-go phone.

Days later, though, another neighbour told Katie that Dougie had shown him the naked photos. He gave a statement to the police, which granted them a warrant to search Dougie's flat.

It was then that they found something far more disturbing – Dougie had been filming women on a mobile phone he'd secretly hidden in the bathroom at a previous house and police found intimate videos on his computer.

Not only had he sexually harassed Katie, but he was also a peeping tom.

Within days, Dougie and his girlfriend moved out of the flat – much to Katie's relief.

In April 2010 he was arrested and bailed, on condition he didn't contact Katie.

Last month, Dougie pleaded guilty at Oxford Crown Court to six counts of voyeurism, five of making indecent images and one charge of handling stolen goods.

He was sentenced to a three-year community order, and ordered to complete a sex offenders' treatment programme and sign the sex offenders' register for five years.

Katie, who gave birth to her and Jack's second son Bradley, this September, says: 'I regret posing for those photos, but at least Dougie got caught – that's the only good thing to come out of all of this.' **R**

Words Janelle Butterfield and Amanda Revell Walton

Photographer Brian J Ritchie