

'Oval Four': Men 'framed by corrupt detective' to go to court

By Danny Shaw

Home affairs correspondent

2 hours ago



Two men who say they were framed by a detective nearly 50 years ago have had their cases referred to the Court of Appeal.

Winston Trew and Sterling Christie were among a group - known as the Oval Four - who were arrested at Oval tube station in south London in March 1972.

They spent eight months in prison for assaulting a police officer and attempted theft.

But a review said the appeal would focus on the officer's "integrity".

The four men, aged between 19 and 23 at the time, were members of a political organisation which represented the interests of black people in London.

They were arrested by a police squad investigating crime on the London Underground.

'Fitted him up'

The operation was led by Det Sgt Derek Ridgewell who was the key prosecution witness at the men's trial when they were convicted.

But the policeman's career ended in disgrace in 1980 when he was jailed for seven years for plotting to steal goods from the Royal Mail. He died in in prison in 1982.

A series of cases have raised further concerns about his honesty, and last year the Court of Appeal **quashed the conviction of a businessman**, Stephen Simmons, after hearing Ridgewell had "fitted him up".

The Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) said it had now decided to refer the cases of Mr Trew and Mr Christie to the Court of Appeal, although it had failed to trace the other two members of the Oval Four.



"The referral is made because the Commission considers there is a real possibility that the court will quash the conviction on the basis of new evidence and arguments concerning the integrity of DS Ridgewell," it said, adding that the case may have "potential significance" for a number of other similar convictions.

Mr Trew, now 69, said he was "absolutely delighted" there was to be a fresh appeal, saying his life had been "shattered" when he was jailed 47 years ago.

"My wife left me, I lost my confidence, I was a shell of the person I was before," he said.

Mr Trew, who remarried and forged a career as a university lecturer and author, said he thought about what happened every day and had "never given up" trying to overturn his conviction.

"The police did something wrong, so I'm going to fight the injustice."

The appeal is expected to be heard next year.

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