

'My husband is the Lottery

IRENE'S WEDDING TO Iorworth Hoare was no ordinary marriage ceremony. There was no bouquet, no fancy dress and no honeymoon to look forward to.

It was held in a bleak prison chapel, with only a couple of prison officers and one guest.

But that didn't bother her. She thought she was marrying the love of her life, a man she trusted completely, and who she believed was in jail for robbing a bank.

So it came as a shock to discover Hoare was a serial sex offender who'd duped her from the moment they met, and is currently causing controversy after winning £7million on the National Lottery.

Irene, 55, only discovered the shocking truth two weeks ago, when she saw the headline "Rapist wins £7million on lottery" in her daily paper.

"My first thought was how outrageous it was," she says. "Then I saw a photo of the rapist and realised it was my husband.

"I felt sick. Discovering he was a sex attacker, not a robber, made my blood run cold. I would never have married him if I'd known. What he did was unforgivable."

Irene was horrified at the extent of his crimes. Hoare had one conviction for rape, two for attempted rape and several for indecent assault. He was first jailed in 1973 and had served four spells in prison before being given a life sentence in 1989, after trying to rape a retired schoolteacher.

"I spent two days shut in my house after the news broke about him being a lottery-winning rapist," Irene admits. "I felt so ashamed, I couldn't face anyone."

But as her anger subsided, hurt set in. "He had deliberately lied about his convictions," she says. "I felt like one of his victims."

Legally, Hoare is entitled to keep the money – and, as a lottery winner, his anonymity. But despite hiring celebrity lawyers Schillings to try to prevent his win becoming public knowledge, it hit the headlines and his new-found wealth continues to anger the nation.

Irene is furious too. "I feel hurt and betrayed," she says. "And there's no way he should be allowed to keep that money."

Irene, a former cleaner from Middlesbrough, Teeside, first contacted Hoare, now 52, in June 1992 after reading about

a prison pen pals service in her local paper.

"In his first letter he said his hobbies were art, antiques and writing," she recalls. "He struck me as a cultured, intelligent man."

A couple of months later, Hoare explained he was serving 15 years for a bank robbery he'd carried out with three friends in 1989.

"I was shocked," says Irene. "But everyone makes mistakes and he seemed sorry."

As they grew closer, he urged her to visit him. That autumn, they met for the first time at Wakefield Prison, West Yorkshire.

The pair were instantly attracted to each other and Irene was soon visiting Hoare once a month. Then, in December 1992, he asked her to marry him.

"I was stunned," she explains. "I'd never considered being his wife. Plus he was in jail. My first instinct was to refuse."

But when Hoare sent her £200 to buy an engagement ring, she realised he was serious.

The couple married in November 1993. The 20-minute prison ceremony was followed by a brief reception.

Understandably, their marriage, which was never consummated,

started to crumble just months after their wedding.

Irene found the monthly visits hard and their letters gradually dwindled. In August 1995, Irene saw her husband for what was to be the last time. The following year he was moved to Albany Prison on the Isle of Wight. The distance between them made the relationship impossible.

"I felt then that it was over for good," she says. "But when I asked Iorworth about a divorce he talked me out of it. He said I loved me, and promised we'd be together when he was let out."

Apart from the occasional letter and phone call, however, the couple continued to have little contact. The last time they spoke was at the end of 2002.

"I gradually let him slip out of my thoughts," she admits. "I didn't want a new relationship, getting divorced wasn't a priority."

And that's how it might have stayed, had her husband not won the lottery. Hoare bought his winning ticket while on weekend leave from Leyhill Prison in Gloucestershire. He was out as part of a rehabilitation scheme because he's due for release sometime in the near future.

Should the lottery rapist be allowed to keep his winnings?

No

Caroline Fairfax Scott, 57, from Bristol, was raped five years ago



"Criminals, even those nearing the end of their sentences, shouldn't be allowed to gamble. They have forfeited their freedom and shouldn't have the same privileges as the rest of us.

"Rapists often reoffend. This money will give Hoare more power to assault again when he's free. He can travel

the world and find women who don't recognise him.

"For his victims, having to hear about Hoare's luxurious lifestyle will be the worst injustice.

"The government should change the law to ensure this never happens again and make Hoare donate his money to his victims and rape charities."

Yes

Julian Young is a criminal lawyer for Foreman Young legal practice in London



"Why shouldn't criminals on leave be allowed to buy lottery tickets? Part of the £1 they pay is likely to go to a lottery-funded cause, which could be a rape charity.

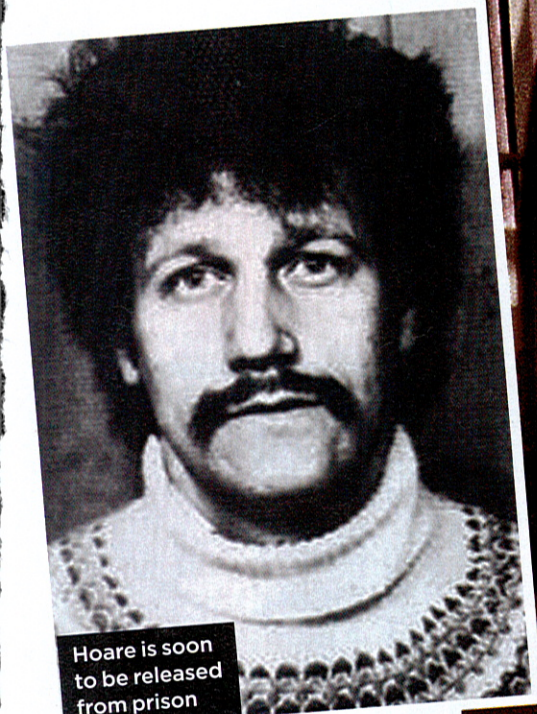
"Changing the law to stop Hoare keeping his winnings would open a can of worms, as would allowing his victims to sue him for some money. Would all criminals or ex-

criminals then have to repay gambling winnings and face being sued by their victims for a share?"

"Hoare has served his time in prison. He should now be allowed to get on with his life. If the government forced him to give back the money, it would make a mockery of the law and our criminal justice system."

rapist'

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Hoare is soon to be released from prison

Despite the fact that Hoare had chosen her birthday as one of his winning numbers – 28 – Irene is adamant that he should not have been allowed to buy the ticket – or keep the money.

“He should give it to the women he assaulted,” she says. “It’s disgusting the way he’s bragging to other inmates how he can afford a luxury house, a Rolls-Royce and an antiques collection. The worst thing is him wanting to spend his money on ‘beautiful girls’ – it’s an insult to his victims.”

Irene claims she doesn’t want any money herself, even though she may be legally entitled to it.

“I don’t want a penny of it. If he gave it to me, I’d give it to charity.

“I don’t want to see him again. He hasn’t been in touch since his win and I haven’t contacted him. I don’t know if I’ll file for divorce now, but it’s definitely an option.

“I’m still struggling to come to terms with the way he hurt those women, and his lies. The fact that he’s won the lottery is the ultimate injustice.” ■

By Antonia Hoyle



1993

Irene and Hoare on their wedding day



NOW

Irene was sickened to discover her husband's sex crimes