

MG11 WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r 27.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5B

Occurrence Number:	5219110473	URN:	
Statement of:	SIMPSON, GEORGE		
Age:		Occupation:	Police officer
This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it, anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.			

I am Police Constable 3356 George Simpson of the Avon and Somerset Constabulary, currently stationed at Shepton Mallet Police Station where I work as the Beat Manager for the town centre. I have been in my current role since October 2018 and joined Avon and Somerset Constabulary in August 2008. As the Beat Manger I am responsible for long term project work that tackles anti-social behaviour and crime and disorder. Since May 2019 I have been actively involved in the investigation into the crime and disorder linked to the public house the Bell Hotel, 3 High Street, Shepton Mallet and the landlord/owner Michael (Micky) TAFT.

I the last couple of weeks there has been 2 incidents in particular that have raised my concerns about the lack of control Micky TAFT has over his pub and those he allows to use it.

On Friday 29th May 2020 at 21.20hrs, I was on foot patrol in Shepton Mallet with PCSO 7118 READING when I walking past the Bell Hotel I realised that there were lights on inside and I could hear voices and movement of people in the bar area, as I had reason to speak to Micky TAFT about another matter I knocked on the door and window to gain the attention of those people inside. Though I was knocking loudly enough those inside seeming did not respond, so I looked through the letter box to call through to gain their attention. Looking through the letter box I could clearly see a dark haired female sitting at the bar surround by a number of different bottles including spirits and wine. From her demeanour I would say that she was heavily intoxicated with alcohol, she was sat on a bar stall gently swaying from side to side and seemed to have no concept that I was there even though I was banging on the door and calling out to her through the letter box, she was only less than 5 meters away from me, so I do believe that any reasonable and sober person would have been able to hear me and react accordingly. Inside the female appeared to look over to the door and simply filled her glass with what appeared to be Rose or Red wine. After a few seconds the female was joined by a dark haired male who I called out to, to come to the door. This male quickly disappeared from view, leaving the female sitting at the bar. I then heard other movements from inside the pub which appeared to sound like the side being opened. After a couple of minutes the side gate was opened by Micky TAFT. TAFT explained that the 2 people at the bar were his cleaners and that they were having a few drinks after work even though it was nearly 21.30hrs. TAFT kept on explaining that he didn't know what exactly they were up to as he has been asleep upstairs. When it was pointed out to him that they certainly appeared to be helping themselves to drinks and spirits from the bar, TAFT seemed to be quite happy for them to do so. TAFT was then asked if the 2 people I had seen were living there he stated that they weren't and that they lived down the hill. It was then explained to TAFT that due to Covid-19 restrictions no one other than the occupants who live in an address should be allowed in or stay any period of time and they the 2 people who TAFT had stated were cleaners should have left as soon as they had finished cleaning. When challenged with TAFT explained that the Bell now had the fire systems in place to be an HMO (house of multiple occupancy), but when asked if the Bell was an actual HMO and had he applied to the council and received the necessary permission and licenses to be an HMO TAFT said 'no'. So it was pointed out to him that anyone who was not living there should leave immediately. TAFT then stated he would get them to leave and closed the gate

behind him. I exhibit my BWVC of this incident as 3356GOS1. This footage was later uploaded to Revel Dems under reference number 5219110473.

At approximately 05.30hrs on Friday 5th June 2020, there was a report of an explosion and fire in the rear garden area of the pub. Log AS-20200605-0109. In support of the investigation I attended the scene at approximately 9.05hrs as I have local knowledge of the pub and have previously been in regular contact with Micky TAFT. On arrival at the pub TAFT was nowhere to be seen, so I called him on the known number I have for him and then sent him a text message asking him to make contact with me ASAP as progress was required in the investigation. While in the rear garden I noticed under the middle table and bench a small resealable plastic bag. These type of bags are widely used when it comes to the supply of drugs, such as cocaine, amphetamine and cannabis. I picked up the small bag and could see clearly that it contained remains of what appeared to be a white powder. I exhibit the small resealable plastic bag as exhibit 3356GOS1 and it was sealed into evidence bag M11419898 and later booked into detained property at Shepton Mallet under reference 5219110473, a photograph of the bag was taken which I exhibit as 3356GOS2. I then stayed at location calling TAFT on a regular basis as I still hadn't been able to speak to him. As the side door was locked I looked into the bar through the side window and I could clearly see on the pool table a small sliver canister and another on the windowsill inside. These canisters in immediately recognised as nitrous oxide canisters. The canisters contain nitrous oxide which is normally inhaled via a balloon and give the user the effects of feeling light headed and relaxed. Possession of Nitrous oxide is covered by the Psychoactive Substances Act and is illegal to supply for its psychoactive effects. I was able to take photographs of the canisters which I exhibit as 3356GOS3. As I was unable to gain access to the pub I was therefore unable to seize the canisters.

I have no doubt that The Bell Hotel, is being used as a place for drug use and the owner Micky TAFT is either participating in this activity or wilfully turning a blind eye to what is happening. TAFT has demonstrated that he has no control or any desire to maintain control over his establishment, which in turn is having a detrimental effect on the neighbours and the wider community of Shepton Mallet.

Signature of Witness		Signature Witnessed By	
Name:	#3356 SIMPSON, G.	Name:	
Signed Time:	06/06/2020 10:36	Signed Time:	