

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

STATEMENT OF BEVERLEY IRWIN

DATED THIS

DAY OF

2008

I, BEVERLEY IRWIN, declare that this statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that if it is tendered in evidence at the Inquiry I will 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.

1. The Inquiry has disclosed a number of documents to me. Where I make specific reference to a document in my statement I have given the number of the relevant page.
2. In April 1997, I was working in Jameson's bar on Thomas Street in Portadown. I had been working there from 1983. Because of the nature of the 'Troubles' back in 1997 and because of where Jameson's was situated in the centre of town, there were often clashes between the two groups and general poor relations, with the windows of the bar being broken and doors being kicked by Catholics coming down Thomas Street. I had heard that trouble sometimes occurred at the junction of Thomas and Market Streets when people left St Patrick's Hall higher up on Thomas Street and walked down past Jameson's or any of the other bars in the town. It is something that is ongoing to this day. However, personally, I had never really witnessed much trouble during the time that I worked at Jameson's because I did mostly day work at the time and I was never there at evening times.
3. I cannot remember much of what happened on the night of Saturday 26 April 1997 because of the passage of time. I do know that I was working in Jameson's that evening. I was the key holder, meaning that I had the keys to lock up. Last orders would have been at 12.45am and the bar would have to be cleared of customers by

1.30am on Sunday 27 April 1997. The staff on duty would then have to do the cleaning up, mopping up and cashing up. On 26 April 1997, the other staff on duty was Julie Sherwood, Stephen Thornbury and Derek Lyttle and they were still there after the last customers left.

4. I first became aware there was trouble outside when I went to lock up the back door. The back door is in fact on Thomas Street itself; at the back end of the bar. It is further up Thomas Street than the main door and so it is further away from the Market Street junction. I have marked on a map [page 73908] the position of the backdoor with a dot and 'B D'. You have to go out the back door to hit a button to close the back door shutter. As I pushed the door open I heard shouting. A man was shouting aggressively "Fucking Orange bastards" [Page 7771]. I thought the shouting was directed at me. I became frightened and did not open the door any further. Julie Sherwood was behind me at that stage and I shouted at her to go quickly and get Stephen Thornbury. I thought that the people shouting might actually try to come in at the door. I do not now recall whether the shutters were being banged that night by the people coming down Thomas Street.

5. At this point I did not actually go outside onto Thomas Street. The door was not opened right out; it was only open a couple of inches. When I heard the shouting I could see maybe five or six figures walking by and going down towards the junction with Market Street. I did not know exactly where they were coming from but they were coming from the direction of the British Legion, further up Thomas Street. By the time Stephen came to the back door the people who had been shouting had already passed. I think I realised then that they were shouting at somebody else at the bottom of the street rather than at me. I was able to open the door, hit the button to close the shutter and come back in. I can't remember even looking out though because I was so frightened, although DC Keys has recorded [Page 7771] "*both looked out briefly saw fight in progress.*" I can't really remember whether Julie came back with Stephen or not.

6. I believe that I then went into the back store room to cash up and check the sales. I know that some time later I went down to the main bar area and opened the front door – by which I mean the middle doors on Thomas Street going into the main bar, which is closer to the Market Street junction – and looked out and saw fighting going on in the street. I would have gone to the front door, which I have marked on a map of the town centre with an ‘L’ [page 73908], because I could not find the other bar staff and I thought that they had gone out on the street in front. However, that would have been a while after I had put the shutter down. I would imagine that it would have been anything like fifteen to thirty minutes after I had closed the back door before I would have looked out the front door; as that is how long it would have taken for me to cash up and check the sales. That means it obviously would have been some time after 1.30am. It may have been around 2.00am or even after but I can’t be sure of the exact time.

7. What I saw from the front door was a big crowd of about fifty people scuffling in the middle of Market Street near the junction with Thomas Street. It was something I had never really witnessed before. It is hard to remember exactly what was happening after all this time but it just seemed to be chaos and a lot of shouting. There was nobody actually standing still. By that stage I would have realised that it was sectarian in nature. I think that Julie shouted at me from the toilet window to get back inside.

8. I did not recognise anyone involved in the scuffling but I do remember thinking that the crowd seemed to be younger than the crowd we might have in at Jameson’s at the time. I remember seeing two police officers; one of them was a police woman, I think, in the middle of this chaos. I think they were trying to stop it but I can’t be sure. There was usually a police Land Rover parked in the centre of town, in the little lay-by near the Alliance and Leicester just on the corner of Woodhouse and Market Streets but I cannot be sure now whether I saw one there that night. It is so long ago now.

9. It has been pointed out to me that in the note of my interview with Detective Constable Keys on 4 June 1997, [page number 7771], I said “*witness saw man in dark clothes lying on road in a recovery position girl with him crying*”. I think the body was on Market Street near the Thomas Street junction. When I used the word ‘recovery’ that was my way of describing that the man was on his side. The crowd of people would have been pretty close to the body but closer to Woodhouse Street, I think.

10. I have been asked whether that body was on the ground at the stage that I was outside the front door. It must have been as I remember looking down the street and seeing fighting with somebody lying on the ground on the road near Thomas Street. It seemed to me that there had been a fight and I came out in the middle or towards the end of it. But then again it is hard to remember so far back now. I do remember though that when I did see the body on the ground that is when I saw the policewoman come up to the body and the girl and stand over them. I think she was saying something to them but I can’t be sure. I don’t think that she bent down or anything. I can’t remember now whether I saw a second body or not. It is difficult now to separate out what I actually saw from what I heard after. I do remember that there was a lot of people and a lot going on. I have marked on a map [73908] the position where I believe I saw the body on the ground.

11. I did not see how the body at the junction of Thomas and Market Street came to be on the ground. I do not remember actually seeing anyone beating him. As I said in my interview with Detective Constable Keys on 4 June 1997 [Page 7771], I did see an older man in his forties with receding hair, wearing a round-necked jumper and possibly a brown jacket, trying to get a younger man in his twenties to leave the area. The younger man was being abusive to the Protestant crowd. My impression of what had gone on was that these men were both Catholic, that the older man was blaming this younger man for starting the whole thing by calling out ‘Orange bastards’ not realising there was a big crowd of Protestants, not just a few. I don’t

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remember now what the younger man was wearing. I might have remembered if I was asked the day after the fight but it is so long ago now I cannot say.

12. As I said, I looked out the front door because I was trying to find the other bar staff. I had actually opened the door and gone out on to Thomas Street at this stage to look for them. In fact, the other bar staff were in the toilet watching the fight from there. I think that they shouted at me from the toilet window to get back inside. I can't remember now how long I was out on the street although I note that in my interview with Detective Constable Keys on 4 June 1997 I said that I was out on the street for approximately five minutes. All I remember is that I was out there long enough to see there was a commotion at the bottom of the street and it made me very scared.
13. I am aware that in the note of my interview with Detective Constable Keys I also said that Stephen and I both looked out at and briefly saw the fight in progress. However, I really can't remember when this would have happened. I don't recall looking out at the stage that I was closing the back door. And when I did look out the front door I don't remember Stephen being with me at all. Neither can I now remember seeing the ambulance arrive.
14. I have been asked whether I talked to the other members of staff about what they had seen from the toilet window. I am sure that I would have but I can't remember now what they would have said and I can't remember specifically whether they would have said how the body came to be on the ground. I don't know how long they had been at the toilet window or what alerted them to go to the window because I had been out the back cashing up.
15. I don't remember going to look out the toilet window myself to see what was going on outside. After I came back in to the bar from outside I can't remember what happened. I probably just finished up what I was doing with the closing up and then left. I probably would not have left though until I thought there was no more

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danger. More likely than not, I drove home because none of the other staff drove. My car would have been parked higher up Thomas Street, away from the fighting at the junction. Unless Derek and Stephen walked home, I probably dropped Stephen off first, then Derek, and finally Julie but I cannot remember what happened on this evening specifically.

16. I have been asked whether there was a CCTV monitor in Jameson's at the time. Although there is one now there was none at the time. There was a security camera on the main door and a TV monitor inside but it did not record. There was a buzzer at the door and the doors were closed early on in the night. In order to enter you would have to hit the buzzer and somebody would have looked at the monitor and buzzed you in. The camera would have covered maybe outside the front part of the bar, which is outside the large shutter door, and a bit of the road.
17. I have also been asked about various other people who are connected with this and I can say that at the time I knew the name Hanvey and knew some of the Hanveys but I did not know Allister Hanvey personally. However, I knew Marc Hobson because he used to live beside me at one time. I knew him from when he was a child. I also knew Timothy Jameson very well. Timothy is my nephew. However, at no stage did I see either Marc or Timothy on the night of 26 April 1997. I did not even know before now that Timothy was supposed to have been in the crowd that night.
18. Finally, I have been asked why I did not give a formal statement to the police when Detective Constable Keys came to see me on 4 June 1997 as recorded in the note of my interview with him. Because I did not see anything, I probably did not even think about making a statement. I probably did not want to get involved. It is hard for me to say now, nine years on, whether I would have made a statement if I had seen something that would have been relevant to the police. I'm a completely different person now. I can say that no one discouraged me from giving a statement. In fact, I remember speaking to a police officer within a day or two of the fight

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when he came to the bar and asked what had happened and who was working on the night of 26 April 1997. I would have given the names of the other three staff. I can't remember what I would have said about the fight then. However, that was the only time I remember speaking to the police. I don't actually remember speaking to the police in June 1997. I do remember receiving a registered letter delivered to my house from the police sometime in 1997 but I can't remember the contents of the letter or any further contact with the police.

19. Since 1997 I have had a number of personal tragedies and have had quite a lot of medical treatment. I cannot remember exactly everything that happened that night and I am unable to add anything more to my statement after all this time.

SIGNED:
BEVERLEY IRWIN

DATED:

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