Man falsely accused of rape on Malia holiday speaks of his ‘year from hell’

Lee Ashman found out this week police were dropping the investigation into him

BY Sophie Corcoran Reporter

05:00, 22 JUN 2019     UPDATED 06:12, 22 JUN 2019

Lee Ashman says he was falsely accused of rape

A man falsely accused of rape while holidaying in Greece has spoken of his "hell".

Lee Ashman, of Longhill, was on a lads holiday in the Greek resort of Malia last year when he was accused of raping a woman in a bar.
After a tumultuous year, with the “horrible” accusations hanging over him, this week Mr Ashman says he was told by a British Consulate official that a judicial decision had found him not guilty of the crime.

Mr Ashman says “one word (rape) almost ruined his life” and since being arrested last year, has suffered depression, seizures and has tried to take his own life three times.

What happened

The 27-year-old says it all started last year when he was holidaying with a group of friends, who met a group of young women in a bar and stayed with them throughout the night.

He said: “The holiday was good and we’d been having a nice time.

"There was six of us out. We went on a night out, was having a lads night getting drunk and having a laugh."
"We went into a bar and spoke to a group of girls, we were having a laugh and things were great."

It was while in the bar Mr Ashman says he had consensual sex with a woman.

He said: “Afterwards, I told her I was going to find my friends and would go and meet her when I found them. I found them in another bar and they were having a drink and I stayed with them to have one there before we went and met the others.”

Mr Ashman then says two policeman entered the bar he was in, asked for him and put him into a police car.

He said: “I heard them say my name and said, ‘that’s me what have I done.’ They didn’t say anything, arrested me and took me to Heraklion prison.

"She was sat in the front of the police car. I got to the prison, there was a translator there who told me I had been accused of rape.

Malia is in Crete, a Greek island (Image: Picture by John Alevroyiannis)

“I couldn’t believe it. I was just astounded and didn’t know what to say or do.”

Mr Ashman was then thrown in a jail cell for three days and was forced to share the “concrete block” with five other cellmates.

During his three-day stay, he says he attempted to take his own life.
He said: “It was horrible. On the second night, a random inmate came into the cell, sat on my bed and hit my leg and said, ‘I know what you’ve done.’

Mr Ashman said that during his stay he was allowed his mobile phone for one hour a day – although he was not allowed to contact members of his family or friends. Despite that, his mum tracked down CCTV footage that showed a time before and after Mr Ashman had what he says was consensual sex with the woman.

He said: “I showed my other cell mates the footage but the other man who said something before started to attack me. Four other inmates got involved and beat him up. There was blood everywhere.

After three days, Mr Ashman says he attended a court hearing and was told he could be bailed and released to come home for a fee of £1,800.

He said: “My dad paid my bail of £1,800. My mum got me the next flight home. They said I was allowed to leave the country but they said that when it had been reviewed there would be a warrant out in England for my arrest and I would have to go back.”

What followed was a tough year, says Mr Ashman, who suffered seizures, which he puts down to the stress, and depression.

He said: “I started taking sleeping tablets and tried to take my own life. Once was in the prison and a cell mate stopped me, another time my brother found me and the last time was my mum. She’s been like a councillor.

Lee in Malia

“I was really struggling, not eating, I couldn’t sleep I just kept lying on my bed. It was horrible, really horrible.”

Since finding out the news earlier this week that a judicial decision found him not guilty, Mr Ashman said a “huge weight” has been lifted off his shoulders.
He says he is also looking at taking legal action of his own.

He added: “I got the email from the British Consulate yesterday and it was the best night’s sleep I’ve had in a year. My mood has changed so much already and it’s such a relief. When I read it I just dropped to my knees, I just couldn’t believe it.

“The British Consulate has been amazing. I can start my life again. That one word nearly ruined my life.”

Sophie Corcoran is a reporter for Hull Live and the Hull Daily Mail. Her interests include positive news, news about homelessness, court news and breaking news. You can follow all the latest stories on her Facebook page, her Twitter page or on the Hull Live website.

You can also call her on 01482 315174 or email sophie.corcoran@reachplc.com