

Express UK article - Mystery Couple Seen Going Into McCann's Flat on Night Before Sobbing Madeleine Disappeared

May 19, 2003

SCOTLAND YARD detectives are trying to find a middle-aged couple said to have entered Madeleine McCann's holiday apartment to comfort her because she was crying, we can reveal today.

It is believed they entered the bedroom on May 2, 2007, the evening before Madeleine disappeared from the Ocean Club at Praia da Luz on Portugal's Algarve.

The tip-off was given by two key witnesses who were reinterviewed as part of the Yard's two-year, £4.5million investigation.

It is already known that Pamela Fenn, who lived directly above apartment 5a, heard a child, believed to be Madeleine, crying for about an hour on the evening of May 2.

She was so concerned she rang a friend in the village to ask what to do and considered ringing Portugal's Policia Judiciaria.

At the time, Madeleine's mother Kate and father Gerry were dining with friends at a tapas bar some 50 yards from the apartment.

A source said: "Police were astonished when this new information came to light. Officers spoke to other key witnesses to discover more about the middle-aged couple.

"Apparently they were concerned about the crying and went to see if they could comfort the girl."

Pamela Fenn has since died, so police have been speaking to other people who were staying in the same apartments.

Our revelation comes as Scotland Yard detectives say there are potentially 20 suspects they want to speak to. Retiring Detective Chief Superintendent Hamish Campbell, head of the Yard's Homicide and Serious Crime Command, urged Portuguese authorities to investigate the new leads.

He said: "There are a lot of people of interest. There are people who could be properly explored further, if only to be eliminated."

Scotland Yard officers have been interviewing witnesses here for months, although the public prosecutor in Portugal has decided against reopening the investigation.

Despite claims of a "Mexican stand off" between Portuguese police and Yard officers, the Sunday Express understands there is in fact very good co-operation between both squads.

Pedro de Carmo, deputy national leader of the PJ, said yesterday: "We still co-operate with their team. There are good communications."

Portuguese officers are very impressed with the diligence of the Met investigation and have been impressed with their interviews with witnesses in Britain.

We can confirm that a couple staying in the same block as apartment 5a were interviewed last February.

They were in their apartment on the night Madeleine vanished. Afterwards they wrote an account of what they saw but were never formally interviewed by Portuguese detectives.

They had been at a restaurant earlier in the evening and left at about 9pm.

On their way home they walked directly past the entrance to the Ocean Club pool, where the "Tapas 7" (the name given to the friends eating with the McCanns on the night Madeleine disappeared) were enjoying the meal with Kate and Gerry.

They walked past apartment 5a but noticed nothing untoward. The woman said in her statement: "I stood on the balcony at about 9.15 with a whisky.

"I saw people eating at the tapas bar and children in the play area. We went to bed at 10pm-ish. We were woken up by our bell ringing at 11.30pm. It was a friend of the McCanns, saying that a little girl had been abducted. The friend asked if we had a computer so they could get the media involved in the search.

"Two police were on the corner of our block, one lady said that off-duty police had come and were searching. We did see single men on mobiles while we were out who could have been police."

The couple took part in the search for Madeleine and then returned to their apartment.

*The woman's statement continues: "We walked back up towards our apartment, a group had gathered on the corner. The McCanns were in bits, he was crying on the shoulder of a friend. She was screaming: 'The f*****g bastards have taken her'. Finally, at around 4am, we said: 'Is it OK if we go to bed?' We directed this comment towards a man in a white shirt and jeans, who seemed to be authoritative."*

At the couple's home here, two Yard officers questioned them separately for three hours and got them to sign lengthy statements. They further interviewed them this year to double check their information.

The couple are key because at precisely 9.15pm on May 3, Jane Tanner, a friend of the McCanns, said she left the tapas bar and walked past Gerry, who was talking to holidaymaker Jez Wilkins outside apartment 5a.

Neither Gerry nor Kate said they saw Jane. She reported that she had seen a man carrying a child, believed to be Madeleine, walking across the top of the road.

At the time she had not realised the significance. Officers asked the couple if they saw Jane, Gerry or Jez but they insist they did not.

The Sunday Express has visited the couple's holiday apartment, which looks over the tapas bar. From its balcony you can see directly into the garden of apartment 5a.

The woman said: "We have one of the best views of the whole block. We are sure of the timings. If we had seen anyone we would have remembered.

"We will continue to answer the Yard's questions. We have given our fingerprints and DNA. We were happy to assist. They should be left to get on with their inquiries."

Source: express.co.uk/news/uk/400796/Mystery-couple-seen-going-into-McCanns-flat-on-night-before-sobbing-Madeleine-disappeared