

logo not found or type unknown

Man Facing Felony Charges for Burglary and Vehicle Theft After Breaking into Vacant St. Thomas Home

Bruce Wheatley is accused of stealing a Range Rover, debit cards, and other valuables. Arrested after being spotted at a jewelry store, he secured his release with a \$55 bail ahead of his November 8 arraignment

Crime / **Published On October 18, 2024 07:13 AM /**

Staff Consortium **October 18, 2024**

Image not found or type unknown



Mugshot of Bruce Wheatley. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. THOMAS — A man who admitted to breaking into a vacant house after becoming homeless is now facing multiple felony charges. He is accused of stealing the homeowner's vehicle, debit cards, and other personal belongings.

According to court documents, police first encountered Bruce Wheatley on Wednesday after being dispatched to a jewelry store on Main Street for suspected credit card fraud. Wheatley had reportedly used a stolen credit card at the jewelry store on a previous date. When he returned to the establishment on Wednesday, police were called in. Dispatchers also informed officers that Wheatley was wanted for other incidents as well.

Responding officers met with Wheatley, who denied making any fraudulent transactions. However, he admitted to being involved in a burglary, and also admitted to the unauthorized use of a vehicle.

Wheatley told police that he used to live at Dronningens Gade with his girlfriend, but they were evicted earlier this month because their landlord wanted to renovate the property. His girlfriend moved in with a relative, but he had nowhere to go. Unemployed, he said he was unable to secure alternative accommodation, and thus became homeless.

About a week and a half ago, Wheatley told police he came across a man working construction at a residence on Dronningens Gade. He enquired about available work, but was rebuffed. However, during the conversation he learned that the owners of the property were currently on vacation out of the territory.

According to police, Wheatley told them that he returned to the residence days later and jumped the fence. Initially intending to rest on the beach chairs in the balcony, he said that he entered the house after discovering a door to the guest room was unlocked. He took a shower, and ultimately ended up staying for three nights. On the second day, Wheatley said he found a key fob for a vehicle and went to a store in Hospital Ground to replace the drained battery. When he returned to the residence, he climbed into a black Range Rover parked outside, drove to a Chinese food store in Lockhart Garden to purchase a meal and immediately returned.

By that time, however, the workman had returned to the site. Even though Wheatley turned his head away when he passed and parked the Range Rover around the corner and out of sight, when he approached the residence the workman reportedly informed him that he knew Wheatley had the vehicle. Police had been called, he was told. Busted, Wheatley said he returned the vehicle to where it had initially been parked and turned the key over to the workman.

However, when police arrived on scene he managed to hide from them until he was able to sneak upstairs, collect his belongings, and flee the area.

On Wednesday afternoon the homeowner, who had just returned to St. Thomas, was contacted and advised to conduct an inventory of his residence before checking in with police. He told them that he had been in Florida on October 9 when his carpenter informed him that his house had been burglarized and his vehicle stolen. A few days later, he said a bank contacted him to inform that someone had tried to cash one of his checks. The bank had also contacted the police, and the Major Crime Unit was conducting that investigation.

After checking his house, the homeowner told police that he found that the second floor shutters had been broken into, and several checks, expired debit cards, and \$22 in \$2 bills had been taken. Two bottles of alcohol had also been consumed, and the left front wheel of his Range Rover was damaged.

Ultimately, Wheatley was arrested and charged with third-degree burglary, unauthorized use of a vehicle, grand larceny, destruction of property, unlawful entry, and trespassing. Initial bail was set at \$25,000, and Wheatley was remanded into custody to await his advice of rights hearing.

While the outcome of Thursday's hearing has not yet been made available to the public, court documents suggest that Wheatley was able to secure his release ahead of trial with a payment of \$55 in cash. His arraignment has been scheduled for November 8.

© Viconsortium 2024