

Stone witness convicted

By **CATHERINE HARKER**
and **SAM RELPH**

A KEY witness in the trial that sent Chillenden murderer Michael Stone to jail for life is himself behind bars this weekend.

Drug addict Damian Daley was one of the police's strongest witnesses in one of the biggest murder trials ever seen in Kent.

Daley claimed Stone, who was on remand in Canterbury prison, had confessed to killing Lin and Megan Russell in July 1996.

Without any forensic evidence or positive identification of Stone at the murder scene, Daley's evidence was vital to the conviction.

But this week 28-year-old Daley was found guilty of possession with intent to supply heroin.

The conviction at Maidstone Crown Court is blow to police who still believe Stone is the murderer.

Last month an appeal judge agreed that there is already sufficient doubt over Daley's testimony that he agreed to reconsider Stone's conviction.

There will be an appeal hearing later this year and Daley's conviction this week means Stone's defence team have been given even

more ammunition in their bid to free him.

The judge at London's Court of Appeal ruled a full appeal should be allowed on the unreliability of the alleged confession.

Stone has become one of Britain's most notorious killers. The horror of the murders was compounded as the country willed its only survivor – nine-year-old Josie Russell – to make a full recovery, despite terrible wounds inflicted in the hammer attack that killed her mother, six-year-old sister and even their pet dog.

It happened in July 1996 a few hundred yards from home as the Russells returned from school.

Last month Stone's solicitor Derek Hayward welcomed the appeal judge's comments. He said: "The cell confession to Damian Daley, we say, was unreliable. This a breakthrough.

"I am delighted on behalf of Michael Stone.

"I hope that we will be able to quash his conviction because he continues to maintain his innocence."

Stone, now 41, was convicted in 1998 of the double murder but was retried and found guilty again in 2001. He was given three life sentences.

Daley, from Folkestone in Kent, is due to be sentenced on April 23.

He was caught by police in a "heroin factory" where his brother was living in Folkestone last November.

Josie Russell and her father moved to Wales shortly after the murders, where they live today. Josie has made a full recovery and shortly sits her GCSE exams.

Her father, Dr Shaun Russell – a former lecturer at the University of Kent, who now works at the University of Wales in Bangor – believes there had been no 'miscarriage of justice' in the original ruling.

Stone's solicitor Mr Hayward was unavailable for comment as Kent on Sunday went to press.

Risking everything for a once in a lifetime bet

TONIGHT one man will really find out the answer to the question "Is this my lucky day?", writes **Sam Relph**.

Ashley Revell will make the most outrageous gamble of his life when he bets everything he owns on a single spin of the roulette wheel.

Ashley, a 32-year-old professional poker player from Maidstone, has sold everything for the ultimate double-or-nothing bet set for Las Vegas.

If he loses he will have nothing but the clothes he is standing in – marooned in the desert.

Explaining his actions, he said: "Playing poker is all about the percentages – it's very technical.

"But there's no thinking involved in this. That's the attraction, it's a pure bet. It's just a question of 'am I lucky?'."

"There's nothing I can do about it either way, whether it's red or black it doesn't matter, the odds are the

same – it's in the lap of the gods."

Ashley's will bet around £100,000 live on television tonight.

It will be the first time roulette has been shown live on television and, if he hits his target, will break the world record roulette gamble.

He has sold a stake in his father's business, his prized BMW 5 Series and a Rolex, down to his clothes and all his possessions.

After coming up with the idea "over a pint" four months ago he approached Sky One, which will show the first of three programmes this weekend.

He said: "It was literally over a pint in the pub. I told a friend about my idea and how I'd like to make a programme out of it.

"Initially I was just going to get a friend to film it documentary-style but we contacted Sky through a production company, Dai 4 Films, and they came back and said they wanted it.



GAMBLER: Ashley Revell

"Since then it has just blown out of all proportion."

A Sky spokesman said: "Viewers will share every moment – how he breaks the news to family and friends, how much money he raises, his flight to Vegas, live through the

event itself and the aftermath."

Ashley said: "Ever since I can remember, I've loved gambling. But this is it – the big one.

"All I have is on the line, everything I've ever worked for is going on red or black."

Ashley, who says he would be kicking himself if he didn't make the bet, has even moved out of his rented flat and sold all his furniture in order to take the ultimate gamble.

He said: "I've sold pretty much everything, even down to my name.

"I'm now Ashley Blue Square Revell for the next three months. They gave me quite a bit of money, which is all going on red or black.

"I don't want to think about winning too much in case I don't and I haven't thought about losing because it's too horrific to contemplate – I'd have nothing, I've no idea what that's like."

The amount Ashley is going to bet is so large many of Las Vegas'

casinos refused to take him on.

After two visits to the world's gambling capital the city's Hard Rock Casino agreed to take the bet.

Speaking about his family's reaction, single Ashley said: "My dad likes to gamble and I thought he'd think it was a good idea.

"But instead he said, 'I've paid good money for your education, all your mates are settling down and getting married and here you are throwing it all away'."

"My mum's worried. She's supporting me but she's just worried about the consequences, while my mates thought it was typical of me.

"I'm a fairly compulsive character and at the end of the day I'm single, I haven't got any kids, I haven't really got any responsibilities so I feel free to do this.

"If the situation was different I wouldn't do it. But I can.

"I'll have to settle down eventually so this is my chance."

Fears for 'alienated' Muslim youths, as the fanatics are condemned

BRITAIN'S first Islamic peer has urged religious leaders to stop disaffected young Muslims becoming "aliens" to society and turning to terrorism.

Lord Nazir Ahmed of Rotherham's call came as Muslim leaders around Kent stepped up preaching directed at younger members, reinforcing the religion's opposition to violence.

They condemned the suspected Islamic bombing plot foiled by police this week and said they are keeping watch for "misguided" extremists within their midst.

Lord Ahmed, who was made a Labour peer in 1998, told Kent on Sunday that disaffected young Muslims were most at risk of turning to terrorism because they often felt unable to "connect" with British society.

By **JAMIE MCGINNIS**

"The Muslim youth who are born British, who have seen racism and prejudice growing, cannot connect with their own elders and they cannot connect with the society they live in," he said.

"We were part of British society in making it the fourth richest country in the world. For our children not to enjoy the fruits of the wealth this country has generated would be a sad thing."

This week nine suspects – three of them teenagers – have been arrested across the South East along with the seizure of huge quantities of material to make explosives.

Mohammed Akram, president of the Maidstone Community

and Islamic Centre, said his mosque, which has 500 members, had already begun providing extra teaching to deter youngsters from joining extremists causes.

"We condemn all this sort of thing," said Mr Akram. "I was shocked when I heard Muslim people are involved in this. They are misguided."

There are 2,600 Muslims in the Medway towns. Khan Sherbaz, treasurer of the Gillingham-based Kent Muslim Welfare Association, said: "I have lived here for more than 40 years, but we've never had a problem in Kent and Medway.

"You can find fanatics anywhere in the world, whatever the religion. If these people have done something wrong they should be put behind bars."

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