



KENT ON SUNDAY

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£10,000 TO FREE HAMMER KILLER

Russell family's distress at sick photo 'competition' to release murderer Stone

THE father whose wife and daughter were savagely killed with a hammer 13 years ago has reacted with "dismay" at a "photographic competition" offering £10,000 for evidence to clear the man twice found guilty of their brutal murders.

Dr Shaun Russell, now living in Wales, spoke exclusively to Kent on Sunday about the obscene offer.

His wife Lin, 45, and daughter Megan, six, were killed in a brutal attack by Michael Stone which left another daughter Josie, who was nine, fighting for her life.

She eventually survived after a long battle in hospital. They were attacked as they walked home from the girls' school. The family dog Lucy was also killed.

Dr Russell, an expert in biodiversity, conservation and ecology, said: "To say I am dismayed that such an offer should be made is quite right."

He said ever since he lost his wife and young daughter in the Chillenden murders, he and

EXCLUSIVE

By **CHRIS MURPHY**

Josie have been plagued by crank callers and conspiracy theorists.

A basic website is on the internet called infotextmanuscripts, is run by a man called Alexander Baron from Sydenham.

He says another of his websites, called IsMichaelStoneGuilty.l.info, is offering the money. Baron writes the site "is offering a reward of £10,000 in an unusual photographic competition". He says the cash will be paid by



DAUGHTER: Josie Russell survived the attack



MURDER: Michael Stone killed two people

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'Thirteen years later and this all carries on'

FAMILY MAN: Shaun Russell (right), and with his wife Lin and girls Josie and Megan



Pictures: IMAGES INTERNATIONAL LTD



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a Sussex entrepreneur to anyone providing pictures or video of drug addict Stone in the Medway towns on Tuesday, July 9, 1996 – the day of the murder.

Baron writes: "We are interested in any photograph or film taken that day even if it cannot be authenticated – we will cross that bridge when we come to it."

And the website begs anyone who does have a picture not to get in touch with Kent Police.

Dr Russell said: "I am dismayed, but not surprised. Another website recently carried a transcript of the autopsy of my wife and child, which was a bit shocking to say the least."

He said the competition appeared to be trying to prove someone else carried out the murders.

He said: "But just offering £10,000 in the hope that someone could come up with a picture of Michael Stone at that time doesn't seem credible. Who would do that without wanting something more out of it?"

"I have to say nothing surprises me after years of cranks, weirdos, fanatics and crazies following my daughter and I around.

"Yes, I felt dismay, but not surprise because of the lengths people go to.

"You can forgive me for being a bit cynical in my old age after what we have been through."

Dr Russell said the chance of anyone coming up with conclusive evidence clearing Stone was slim, and he is sure the right man is behind bars.

There were claims another man called Levi Bellfield was the Chillenden killer, but no evidence ever emerged. The 41-year-old wheel clamber was jailed last year for a series of hammer murders of women in London.

There was no forensic evidence linking Stone to the murder. But given the lengthy judicial process, Dr Russell said he was convinced of Stone's guilt.

Evidence

He said: "There has been two jury trials, and appeals. The process has gone right through, people have believed the evidence witnesses have given in court.

"There was a massive pile of circumstantial evidence which is never thoroughly addressed by the people trying to prove Michael Stone's innocence.

"I have to go, in the absence of any better basis, on the findings of two complete trials which cost a huge amount of money, where the best legal brains are applied, and the decisions of the appeals judges. Thirteen years later and this all carries on."

One trial was told Stone, 49, confessed while on remand to another inmate. The court also heard Stone had gone to a friend's house with a blood-spattered T-shirt and later burned clothing.

Chillenden is in the constituency of Labour MP Gwyn Prosser. He too is shocked by the photographic contest.

He said: "This terrible attack and murder took place in my constituency nearly 13 years ago and two different juries on two different occasions have been convinced by the evidence that Michael Stone was the murderer – and in my book that makes him guilty.

"If verification of his presence in the Medway towns has not been forthcoming over all these years it's not likely to emerge now, and reducing this deadly serious matter to a photographic competition is to

invite all sorts of unauthenticated responses from all sorts of potty people and I think it should be discouraged."

The man who runs the website sent a curt response to Kent on Sunday after it was pointed out he had caused upset for the Russell family.

Baron likened Stone's case to that of teacher Sion Jenkins who was eventually cleared of the tent peg murder of his step-daughter Bille-Jo, 13, at their home in Hastings in 1997.

Baron wrote: "You can have four lines. Look at the massive evidence against Sion Jenkins, then look at the so-called evi-

DR SHAUN Russell has revealed that some disturbed people even want his family to help them with their problems.

He said: "One man has been trying to track my daughter down for six years and I had to keep him in my office for six hours after dark.

"He wanted to lock the door and not let me out because he was desperate. His parents had died – one had killed the other and he wanted to find out how Josie managed to get through it so well, whereas his life had fallen apart after it happened to him.

"So I had to do my best to keep this guy happy for six hours before he went off.

"But then he self-harmed himself and ended up in hospital later than night.

"The police and people who were trying to help him said that I really should not involve myself and be worried about him.

"When someone comes to me for help what can I do? He had phoned me up from hospital and asked me to take him a change of clothing because he had himself covered in blood after he'd hurt himself.

"This was just a couple of months ago – and as I say, this is happening 13 years on from when all this happened. We can't get beyond it, as you would not expect us to, but other people don't let us either."

dence against Michael Stone, and ask yourself honestly and objectively – why is Stone in prison. And why is Jenkins walking the street? Ta ta."

A little later, after the KoS pointed out Baron has not confronted the "competition" aspect, the paper received an email from www.MichaelStone.co.uk webmaster John Aidiniantz, based in Baker Street, London.

He wrote: "I think the 'competition' referred to should be regarded more as an appeal, as there are no 'winners' in helping to bring to justice a murderer. The CCRC (Criminal Cases Review Commission) is currently considering Stone's application to refer his conviction back to the Court of Appeal, which in itself may be considered

upsetting to some people, although probably not to the Russell family.

"Any citizen who is convicted on the strength of a confession which simply repeats what has been published in the morning newspapers is bound to give rise to a miscarriage of justice. The Crown Prosecution Service and the police did not use an ounce of common sense in prosecuting Michael Stone, as anyone can readily understand if they read up on the case."

Fraud case hearing

A DOZEN people are set to appear in court to face charges of conspiracy to defraud a tour operator of around £235,000.

Kent Police arrested seven people in relation to attempts to defraud Thomas Cook in October last year. The arrests were made after reports of fraud involving holidays booked to Jamaica paid for using compromised credit cards.

Tomorrow, 12 people, 11 of them from Kent, will appear at Maidstone Crown Court after they were charged with fraud in April this year.

Gurkhas honoured

THE Gurkhas based in Kent will receive the Freedom of Folkestone at a special ceremony and parade next week.

The 2nd Battalion the Royal Gurkha Rifles will be awarded the honour in the town centre next Thursday.

Actress Joanna Lumley and local supporters from the Gurkhas Justice Campaign will also take part in the celebrations.

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