

Fresh balaclava clue could clear Michael Stone over brutal Chillenden hammer murders

It was discovered half a mile away from the murder scene, and could be a key piece of evidence

Tim Pettifor
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Michael Stone has been convicted with the murders (Image: Getty Images)

The man convicted of murdering Lin and Megan Russell could have his innocence proven by a balaclava.

The item contained 22 hairs that did not belong to the victims and fibres that matched clothes they were wearing.

It has been requested by Michael Stone's lawyers, the man convicted of the hammer attack in Chillenden that the balaclava is sent for testing using new DNA techniques.

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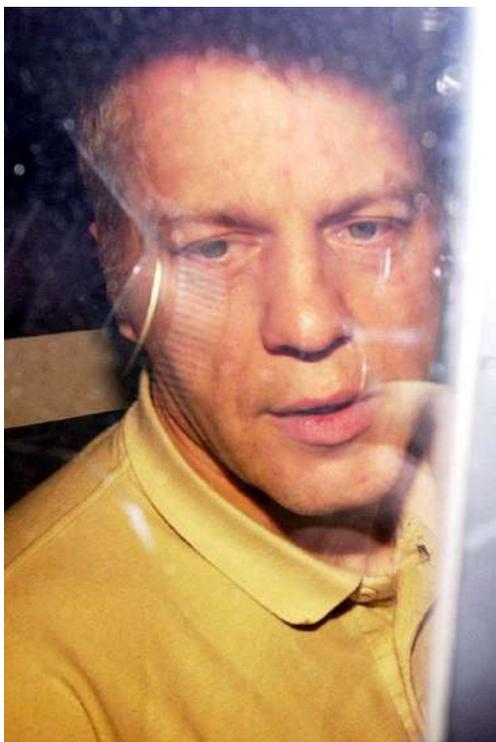
Stone, 61, has twice been found guilty and is serving three life sentences for killing the 45-year-old mother and her six-year-old daughter, who were found bludgeoned to death on July 9, 1996.

Despite suffering severe head injuries, Lin's other daughter, Josie, survived after making a remarkable recovery.

No scientific or identification evidence links Stone to the scene.

The Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) which investigates possible miscarriages of justice, is still looking into the case.

Mark McDonald, Stone's barrister, insists his client is not the culprit, and instead claims notorious serial killer Levi Bellfield has confessed to the murders.



Michael Stone was convicted of killing a woman and her daughter

He says Bellfield, who denies the killings and any confession, was known to wear balaclavas.

He has asked the CCRC to test the item.

Det Chief Supt Paul Fotheringham of Kent Police said: "We have been providing (the CCRC) with all relevant information and evidence required."

Here's all we know about the evidence.

Balaclava

A red cotton fibre and a blue synthetic fibre on the outside matched fibres in Megan's jumper and Josie's cardigan.

This was discovered by police in Nooketts Wood, and forensic scientist Jim Fraser said none of the 22 hairs found on the item were from the victims. He said some were suitable for DNA testing.

Mr Fraser writes in his book, *Murder Under the Microscope*, that officer Dave Stevens wanted to have the balaclava tested further but scientists persuaded him not to as two fibres were not enough to "draw reliable conclusions" on whether it had been worn by the killer.

The prison 'confessions'

By a verdict of 10 to two, Stone was convicted at Maidstone crown court in 1998 after the jury heard from three witnesses.

Stone was then found guilty on a second occasion by a majority verdict in 2001.

Fellow prisoner and violent drug addict Damien Daley told the court Stone had admitted the crime as they talked from next-door cells.

The judge told the retrial jury: "The case stands or falls on the alleged confession."

The bloody t-shirt

Police were told by former prisoner Lawrence Calder and his girlfriend Sheree Batt that they saw the defendant the day after the murders wearing a T-shirt, which had blood around the collar.

Stone told police if he had been guilty, he would not have walked around in blood-soaked clothes 16 or 18 hours later.

However, Batt's mother Jean accused her daughter of lying and said she also saw Stone with blood on his shirt but that was four days after the murders.

Mrs Batt and her husband claimed police harassed them to say it was the day after.



Lin Russell and daughter Megan, who were both killed (Image: PA)

The bootlace

A lace was discovered close to the scene on Cherry Garden Lane and did not belong to the victims.

However, it did have the blood of one of them on it.

Mr McDonald revealed earlier this year that it was lost by police and then rediscovered.

It has been undergoing tests in recent months, however Mr Fraser says in his book that the lace was contaminated by a junior scientist during the original investigation.

He wrote: "From that day, gloves, overshoes, face masks and over-suits with the hood up were mandatory at major crime scenes in Kent."

The eyewitnesses

Nicola Burchell had seen a man fitting Stone's description in a car by the path shortly after the murders.

However, she did not pick him at an ID parade. Neither did Josie Russell.

Michael Stone

Stone was a heroin addict who kept syringes and a boot lace in his car.

He would use it to wrap around his bicep which would raise a vein he could inject into.

Stone lived near Chillenden and would often carry tools in his car, including a hammer.

Levi Bellfield



Serial killer Levi Bellfield (Image: PA)

Bellfield, 53, is serving life for killing Milly Dowler, 13, Marsha McDonnell, 19, and Amelie Delagrance, 22, between 2002 and 2004.

In 2017, Stone's team suggested that Bellfield had killed Lin and Megan.

They say he bore a remarkable likeness to an e-fit issued after the Chillenden killings and an ex-girlfriend had claimed he would travel to Kent in the 90s to sell drugs.

Commenting is subject to our [house rules](#).

All Comments

Yolande Kenward 4 DAYS AGO

The Daily Mirror has the same article as this, so it can be seen in their comments section there that the real Chillenden Murderer has been "outed" by someone who I confirm I was married to before he married Anna Preece a Kent Messenger Maidstone & Woman reporter whose death was faked in 2016

<https://www.kentlive.news/news/kent-news/fresh-balaclava-clue-could-clear-5631529>