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Chillenden murders: Michael Stone's sister Barbara still campaigning to prove he didn't kill Lin and Megan Russell

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Despite two trials and a failed appeal, the sister of convicted killer Michael Stone continues to protest his innocence 24 years after he was arrested for the Chillenden murders.

Now, as new evidence is looked at and her brother's parole date nears, she spoke with senior reporter *Nicola Jordan* about her crusade and how her life was also changed forever by the horrific crime.

Barbara Stone was finishing a cup of coffee before setting off to her course at MidKent College when she got the call that turned her world upside down.

Her older brother Mick has been charged with one of the most heinous murders in the history of modern British criminal history – the savage hammer attack of a mum and her daughter as they walked home from school.

On July 9, 1997 – a year to the day after the attacks – Michael Stone was arrested at his Gillingham home for the horror in an isolated country lane in Chillenden, near Canterbury.



Pictured in September 2021, Barbara Stone has spoken about her long-running campaign to free her brother

Dr Lin Russell, her daughter Megan, six, and the family's pet dog Lucy were brutally attacked.

Dr Russell's other daughter, nine-year-old Josie, was left for dead – suffering horrendous injuries and brain damage.

Mum-of-two Barbara – then a 35-year-old mature student – could not believe what she hearing.

She said: "I nearly fainted. I felt numb, dead."

One of five children, Stone had a fractured childhood. His parents separated and he was placed in a home where he was abused.

His criminal career started at the age of 12 when he was caught shoplifting. This progressed to violent crime into adulthood.

After coming out of the care system, he started using heroin and served several prison sentences.

He would steal from garden sheds, mug people and take anything he could sell for his next fix. But despite his troubled past, Mick and Barbara remained close.

She said: "We were alike, apart from the criminal element. We had the same thought processes and sense of humour.

"He was a bit bossy and a bit of over-protective."

Barbara was aware of his darker side but said: "I was too much into my sport."

Growing up in Maidstone town centre, she attended the former Vinters Park School, now Valley Park School, played netball and korfbal.

From day one, Barbara was adamant her brother was a victim of injustice and has fought tirelessly to prove his innocence.

She said: "It soon became clear the police were clutching at straws. There was not a scrap of evidence."

An overwhelming factor for her was that Mick adored children and it was unthinkable he would ever harm a child, let alone brutally attack one.

Despite Stone being handed three life sentences in 1998, convicted again at a second trial in 2001 and losing an appeal in 2005, Barbara has continued campaigning.

Not only did she support him as the case went through the courts, she often turned detective researching and following up leads.

Stone has not been out of the headlines much over the past 25 years as any possible grain of new evidence is scrutinised.

Registered mental health nurse Barbara said: "I wake up every morning and think of him in his cell. I feel a bit of me is missing."

Chillenden is worlds apart from her brother's seedy drugs scene in Medway, but what happened there has totally impacted on Barbara's life.

The 59-year-old added: "In 24 years, my children have grown up and it has affected my parenting and I have had to deal with the emotional trauma of losing both my parents."

Their four-times married mother Jane died just before Christmas and father Peter died several years ago.

She said: "It has also impacted on my career choices. I can't work in prisons or have anything to do with forensics.

"People look at me and say 'that's the murderer's sister, she must be as mad as a hatter, a bit deluded'."

The 300-mile distance between her home in Chatham and HMP Frankland in County Durham where Stone is being held has meant she is unable to visit him as much as she would like. But they talk every day.

She said: "Mick rings me once or twice a day. He's alright, focused on his artwork and exercise, but at the moment he's very anxious about Levi Bellfield's revelations and him admitting his connections with Chillenden."

The Bellfield statement is considered a major breakthrough in potentially linking the murders with him and is being considered by Stone's legal team which still await the outcome of a criminal review of his case.

Barbara added: "Mick wants Bellfield's DNA tested, but that is proving difficult and Mick has always said he is prepared to do a lie detector."

After that harrowing call 24 years ago, Barbara has tried to carry on with being a daughter, mum and successful career woman.

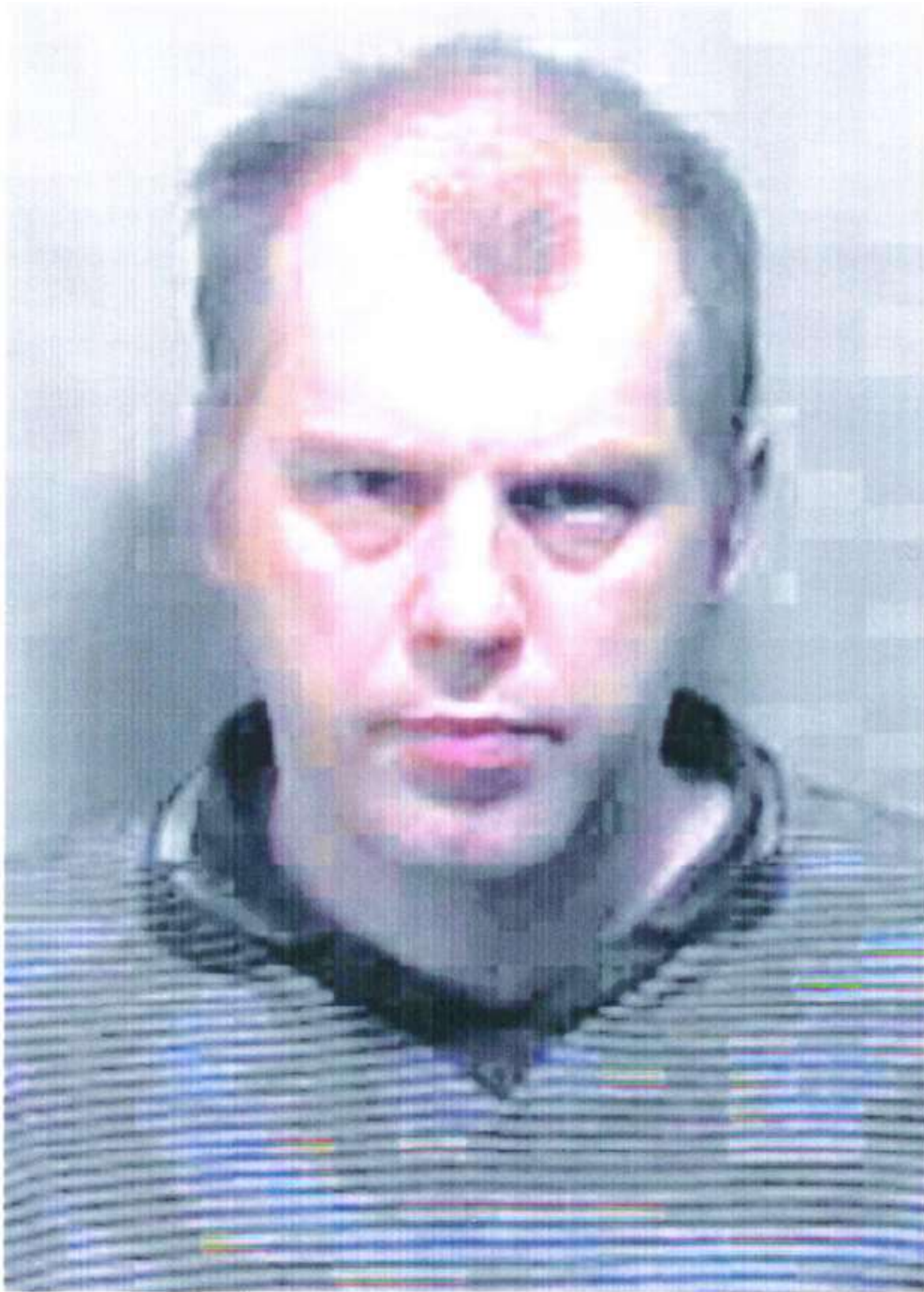
"Even after being told, I went to college that day, followed by the press," she said.

But she pledged from that moment to fight for her brother's freedom.

"I don't want to die with Mick still in there. Twenty-four years later and I'm still fighting for him.

"If he does come out, I dream of making all those people who said such nasty things apologise on Facebook."

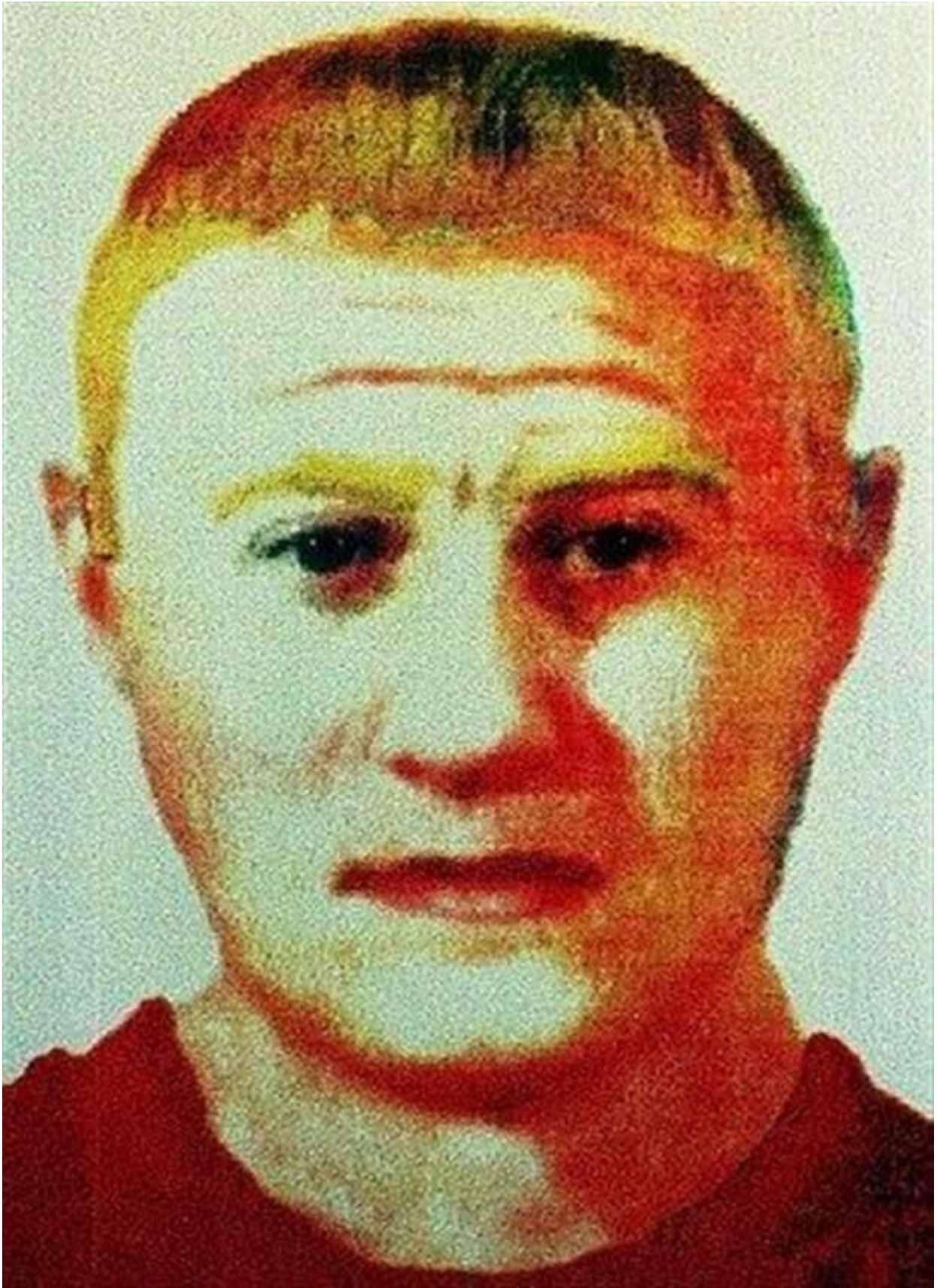
Stone, who is now 61, is due to be considered for parole next year, but is unlikely to be released without confessing to the crimes.



A police mugshot of Michael Stone from 1998



Michael Stone pictured in the 1990s



The Chillenden murder e-fit issued by Kent Police in 1996



Barbara Stone outside the High Court to speak to the media about her brother's failed appeal in 2005



Barbara Stone pictured in 2016



Serial killer Levi Bellfield



A cross carved into a tree near the scene of the killings

Notorious serial killer

Levi Bellfield is reported to have torn apart his own alibi for the brutal Chillenden murders, while trying to show how he wasn't involved.

The triple murderer, who is serving two whole-life terms also at HMP Frankland, has admitted being in the area on the day in 1996.



Lin Russell and her six-year-old daughter Megan

According to reports, in a 15-page statement passed to the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC), the 53-year-old reveals he drove a car similar to the one seen near the scene and flew back from holiday to have it destroyed in the days after the crime.

The statement goes on to detail how he twice visited Cherry Garden Lane where Lin, six-year-old Megan and dog Lucy were beaten to death and how he was going out with a woman whose dad ran a pub in the village.

He writes: "I wish to set the record straight. It is my hope that by making this statement a line can be drawn under my suspicion of committing the 1996 Chillenden crimes."

In 2008, he was convicted of murdering Amélie Delagrangé, 22, and Marsha McDonnell, 19, and the attempted murder of 18-year-old Kate Sheedy.

Three years later he was found guilty of the 2002 murder of 13-year-old Milly Dowler.



Josie Russell survived the horrific attack which claimed the lives of her mother and sister

He has suffered from mental health issues in prison and has previously said he had no links to Kent before 2002.

He addresses the coincidences in the statement and says he is speaking out as they would eventually resurface.

Former detective Colin Sutton, who headed up the team which caught Bellfield, said the statement was "surprising".

"But knowing Bellfield as I do, this could be him playing mind games."



Josie's dad Shaun Russell

New evidence examined

Stone's solicitor Paul Bacon is encouraged by the new evidence.

He has always maintained there were striking similarities between the Russell murders and the method Bellfield used to kill two of his three victims with a hammer.

Mr Bacon made an application to the CCRC in 2017 on the basis of information received from one of Bellfield's fellow inmates and fresh evidence regarding a "missing" shoe lace which was used to link his client to the scene.

DNA tests did not match with Stone and his legal team want new forensic examination to determine whether it's Bellfield's.



Murdered Milly Dowler

The review, which has been delayed because of the pandemic, will determine whether an appeal is valid.

He said: "I think we may have the preliminary view some time in October. We will be given a set period to respond and perhaps the final review may come through in December or January.

"It will be then decided whether the case goes to a second appeal against conviction."

A revelation Kent Police had tracked down a previously-lost shoelace found at the scene, and possibly deemed as a murder weapon, is significant, said Mr Bacon.

He said: "We get no feedback from the CCRC. It came as a complete shock about the shoelace."



Pictured in September 2021, Barbara Stone has spoken about her long-running campaign to free her brother

Mr Bacon has highlighted a police e-fit of the Russells' killer looked more like Bellfield than Stone and that Josie described him as being a little taller than her father Dr Shaun Russell, who is 6ft. Bellfield is 6ft 1in and Stone is 5ft 7ins.

Josie also said the murderer had spiky hair similar to the style Bellfield had at the time.

She also described seeing a beige car near the scene and Bellfield has admitted having similar Ford Sapphire which he destroyed.

Stone was driving a white vehicle at the time of his arrest.

- **Old-hippy-guy wrote:**

15/10/2021 15:16

Micky Stone was a notoriously bad man around Medway, and a terrible burglar (unless you really wanted a broken lawnmower or a rusty bicycle). He possibly should have been in prison for other previous crimes. I don't believe and never have that he was guilty of this one though.

With such a high profile case it matters that the right person is attributed to these crimes. This has Belfield written all over it.

- **ben roberts wrote:**

28/09/2021 18:20

I can't say if Stone is innocent or not, none of us really know that. What I can say is never use the solicitor that helped defend him (Derek Hayward). The man is shockingly bad at his job. I believe all defendants deserve the right to a fair hearing and the evidence against Stone was very slim. Let's be honest about it, Stone got convicted for this crime because he couldn't afford a better Legal team.

- **PatientSupportTrust wrote:**

29/09/2021 05:08

It does not make any difference which solicitor represents Michael Stone as they are all under instruction from the Law Society to frame him et al to protect Whitehead Monckton Maidstone over the 1980 origins of these 1996 murders which were linked in 1996 to the 1987 Trophy murders of Tunbridge Wells; the Law Society has instructed its members to frame David Fuller at the Maidstone Crown Court next month aided by defence witnesses being barred.

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- **Joe Public 2 wrote:**

30/09/2021 15:02

I wouldn't be at all surprised if a law firm's reputation was put before the need for justice. Also when you have a high-profile crime such as this the police are under immense pressure to convict somebody. Case in point Barry George. I still believe money talks though, money buys power and with enough power, you can worm your way out of pretty much anything.

- **muhamad wrote:**

28/09/2021 12:38

We all know your brother is innocent. Yes he's no angel and had a problematic life before being falsely convicted, but that doesn't matter. The problem is Kent Police will never admit they got this wrong, your focus should be on finding out why that is. I suspect someone at the very top would have egg on their face.

- **R6ply wrote:**

27/09/2021 13:08

MY APOLOGIES DAMIEN DALEY IS A CONVICTED MURDERER ...

- **R6ply wrote:**

27/09/2021 13:05

This man was convicted on the say so of Damien Daley, who is not a convicted murderer. There has not be one shred of forensic evidence linking Michael Stone to these murders. It was all circumstantial. I grant that you wouldnt have been pleased inviting the man to tea with grandma but he is no killer and he is innocent of the crimes he has been convicted of. I am convince that he will either die in prison or he will be released. And I pray it will be the latter.

- **Disgustedoftonbridge wrote:**

27/09/2021 12:30

Why did he burn all of his clothes in the back garden, the day after the murders?

hamad wrote:

28/09/2021 12:40

"At the first trial, one of the prosecution witnesses alleged that during the police interrogation I confessed to burning the clothes I wore on the day after the murders. After later scientific audio tests, it was conceded that I never said that at all. Further, nobody has ever said they saw me burning my clothes."

<https://uk.local.kent.narkive.com/8OPpiSFC/a-personal-message-from-michael-stone-regarding-the-chillenden-murders>

- **rightagain wrote:**

27/09/2021 11:05

Correct to say that this murderer should not be in jail.
He should be at the end of a rope.

- **Zesty13 wrote:**

27/09/2021 10:59

If it comes to light that he is in fact innocent. 24yrs inside would do a lot to you in prison, he'd need a lot of help & to be watched for a while

- **Honestly wrote:**

27/09/2021 09:58

Michael stone should be a free man.

- **the_one wrote:**

27/09/2021 09:30

Cue all the comments from social media's legal experts

I think it's fair to say that Stone is not slam dunk guilty, and that being the case, then there is an argument for a proper case review including full DNA evidence from all parties involved and suspected.

I mean, it's not like there has never been miscarriages of justice in the past, convicting innocent people with questionable evidence, has there? He might well be a less than model member of society, but that doesn't make him a murderer without concrete and irrefutable evidence. What happened to innocent until proven guilty beyond reasonable doubt? While there is doubt, every possible means should be extended to prove beyond doubt his guilt or innocence once and for all.

- **Marc Harris 2 wrote:**

27/09/2021 09:26

This man is guilty and his confessions in prison prove that! The man had loops sewn in his jacket to slide a hammer through. He was always carrying. Used to drink at the three sisters and would let everyone know he was tooled up! Terrible crime. The right man was convicted!

- **Suit You wrote:**

27/09/2021 08:54

They got the right person.

stone is guilty

- **rightagain wrote:**

27/09/2021 11:16

Correct.

It's his family making all these ridiculous comments on his innocence.
Anyone considering how the Russell's feel?

- **Whoisshe!!! wrote:**

27/09/2021 11:34

Shaun the father/husband has officially said he DONT think it was stone and also that if he was on the jury he would of said NOT GUILTY!

- **Marc Harris 2 wrote:**

27/09/2021 14:28

It seems the people commenting in favour of release have no idea about this case. Dailey was a witness who had nothing to gain by giving evidence in court. It's a shame the Nurse that also heard his confession wasn't granted permission to give evidence due to so called breeches in patient confidentiality. Stone himself had told mental health teams prior to the murders he had urges to kill. Circumstantial as the evidence was there was overwhelming evidence and coincidences / actions that stone took to try and cover his tracks. The man is as guilty as they come!

- **R6ply wrote:**

27/09/2021 17:54

Damien Daley had at the time of agreeing to be a witness had many, yes many criminal charges dropped... and you state that he had nothing to gain...well now you know he had something to gain... Karma has sorted Daley out quite ironic that he is himself a convicted killer...

- **Marc Harris 2 wrote:**

27/09/2021 18:22

He had nothing dropped! He had already been sentenced and was serving when stone opened up to him. The crime and detail shocked Dailey which is why he gave evidence. If your going to challenge be factual. Daley was convicted along with 6 others in a drug war murder. Stone killed because of his paranoid schizophrenia and drug abuse compelled him. Even Without Daley's evidence there was still so much more that led to Stones conviction. It seems Only members of the family and friends harbour such bias and reject the facts.

- **R6ply wrote:**

27/09/2021 22:26

There are opinions and there are facts... you really do need to get your facts correct... Michael Stone has never been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia had he killed because of this like you state he would have ended up in Broadmoor and not a prison...for your information he was diagnosed with having a Borderline

Personality Disorder. I am neither a member of the family or a friend of his before you start jumping, again, to incorrect presumptions.

Barbarastone001 wrote:

27/09/2021 21:32

The information in this comment is misleading and untrue in parts I never stop wondering where it all comes from

- **Suit You wrote:**

27/09/2021 08:54

They got the right person.

stone is guilty

- **Barbarastone001 wrote:**

27/09/2021 15:23

Do you know of any evidence that would show that or is the no smoke without syndrome working overtime

1 Reply

- **TheOtherSideOfTheStory wrote:**

17/11/2021 16:46

Is this Johnny porter? you sure write and sound like him. Complete waste of oxygen.

- **joblogs wrote:**

27/09/2021 08:34

The more the time goes on and new evidence and science has improved I think that Stone should be allowed another trial this doesnt sound like a sister who is blind to her brothers criminal career she seems intelligent and responsible. I always thought it was too neatly tied up, the murders, at the time and im 100% behind who is the real killer to spend his life in jail even if that was Stone but I do think it's only fair to the Russel family too to have the right the murderer is put away for life. Its was a horrendous act and I would not be suprised if it was Belfield he is one evil man.

- **Whoisshe!!! wrote:**

27/09/2021 07:28

Michael Stone is a innocent man he needs to be freed!

<https://www.kentonline.co.uk/medway/news/my-brother-didnt-kill-mum-and-daughter-254565/>