

It is one of the most infamous crimes of my generation – a true midsummer murder – which took place in the idyllic setting of a farmhouse nestled amongst the peaceful rolling Essex countryside.

Jeremy Bamber described by the Judge as ‘*evil, almost beyond belief,*’ is one of only 38 prisoners in England and Wales who is serving a whole-life sentence, he is however the only one to maintain his innocence. As a whole lifer, Bamber is in the company of other notorious killers such as Rose West, Dennis Nilsen, Peter Sutcliffe and Ian Brady.

Bamber has always protested his innocence, he took a lie detector test in 2007 which he passed and after very careful investigation and analysis of the evidence I believe him, making this one of the biggest Miscarriages of Justice cases.

I first started writing to Jeremy back in early February 2012 because the case not only always fascinated me, but because I wanted to find out more about some aspects of it that did not sit comfortably with me. As a result of my contact with him and his solicitor I decided to make a programme later that year, which focused specifically on the issues of the moderator and the burn marks on the back of Neville Bamber, Jeremy’s dad. The programme rated very well, watched by over 3.4 million with 17% share. Since then I have been writing to Jeremy every 4 or 5 months, and he always sends me a Christmas card.

Jeremy like many other notorious prisoners gets fan mail, overwhelmingly from women, some I guess have a macabre fascination with him and his case and

others who have formed a small group to fight for him in his continued quest for his conviction to be quashed.

One thing that always surprises me about Jeremy is his continued upbeat attitude to his daily monotonous routine. As a journalist I am not allowed to visit or speak to him without the authority of the Ministry of Justice, and they have refused me permission. Initially they even refused my contact with him by letter, but eventually allowed it. In his letters to me Jeremy is always positive, telling me about his latest quest to make an application to the Criminal Case review or his application to CPS for release of documents which he believes were never released.

The Bamber case can be told very clearly through two prisms, that of the police and Crown or through Jeremy's own version, however my approach is always one of objectivity and independence, creating a third prism by analysing all the evidence and drawing my own conclusions.

Rather like the villages of Dunblane and Hungerford remembered for the tragic mass killings by Thomas Hamilton and Michael Ryan, respectively, the beautiful village of Tolleshunt D'Arcy, in rural Essex will also sadly be remembered forever for the horrific events that occurred at White House Farm in the early hours of the 7th August 1985.

The scene that greeted the police officers on their entry into the farmhouse was one of blood-soaked carnage. In the kitchen on the ground floor, they found the body of sixty-one-year-old Neville Bamber, dressed in his pyjamas and slumped over a chair. He had been shot eight times, six of the bullets fired at close range into his head. He had put up a fierce fight against his lethal assailant,

during this struggle a ceiling light was broken, furniture became upturned and Neville also received a beating to his face.

But further atrocities awaited the police as they moved further into the house, upstairs in one bedroom with tragic poignancy, were the bodies of six-year-old twins Daniel and Nicholas Cafell. Eight bullets, all delivered from very close range, had accounted for them as they slept.

In the master bedroom lay the heavily blood-stained body of sixty-one-year-old June Bamber on the floor between the bed and the door. Dressed in her nightie, she had been shot seven times, once through her forehead right between her eyes. She had clearly been shot initially whilst in bed, given the bullet marks in the pillows, before moving or being moved to her resting position. Finally, in the same room on the other side of the bed, lay prostrate on the floor, a few inches away and almost parallel with the bed was the body of twenty-eight-year-old Sheila Cafell, the mother of the murdered twins, dressed in a light blue nightie. Sheila's head was laid to the right, she had two bullet wounds in her neck, she had blood on her neck, to her top and lower forearms and blood on the sole of her left foot. She had no blood on any other part of her body or nightie. Laying along her body was a rifle, later confirmed as the murder weapon, the barrel resting on her chin and her right arm over the gun with her fingers just above the trigger. Beside her on the floor to the right, open at a page, was a bible and a pair of blue socks. The bible was never produced at court and has since been destroyed, so we will never know what page it was open at or what significance this could have had.

Altogether 25 rounds had been fired during this massacre, in which three generations were tragically and brutally murdered.

Around 03.30 am on August 7, 1985, Bamber telephoned Chelmsford police station. *'You've got to help me!'* he said tersely to the officer, he stated that he had just received a frantic phone call from his father, who'd said, *'Please come over. . . Your sister's gone berserk and she's got the gun,'* before the line went dead.

Jeremy Bamber met the police at the farm shortly after this, but the police then had to wait for firearms officers before they could enter, they did eventually force entry at 07.35am where they discovered the massacre.

Initially the police were certain that the bloodbath had been committed by Sheila Cafell during some kind of frenzied breakdown. She was a vulnerable ex-model with a long history of mental illness. All the victims were members of her immediate family, her adoptive parents, Neville and June, the owners of White House Farm and her twin sons, Daniel and Nicholas. The pattern of killing suggested that Sheila had killed the other four and then shot herself in a deranged murder-suicide.

The notes by Acting Detective Chief Superintendent Mike Ainsley confirm this:

"At the time of the murder ... I was on annual leave ... On my return from annual leave I obviously enquired of Kenneally as to the situation with the murders and he assured me that Sheila Cafell was responsible.

At the beginning of September ... following a meeting with the ACC Mr Peter Simpson, I instructed Kenneally to carry out a review of the case.

On Friday 6th September.... A meeting was held in my office with the Chief Constable R Bunyard, Mr Peter Simpson, Det Supt Kenneally and myself. When

Kenneally was asked to give us the result of his review he stated that the evidence indicated that Sheila was responsible.”

Dr Craig - the Doctor who attended the crime scene formed the view that the position of Sheila, the gun and the wounds were all suggestive of suicide.

But then the investigation took a very bizarre twist, the police did a full 360 turn - deciding it was a scene of mass murder, with Sheila's murder made to look like suicide.

A month after the killings Bamber's girlfriend at the time, Julie Mugford, came forward with some very serious allegations which made Bamber the central suspect. Bamber was still in a relationship with Mugford, but also having a relationship with another woman. Mugford's new evidence was that Bamber had confessed to her his plans before the killings and had hire a hitman for £2,000 to murder the family and that hours before the shooting he had told her: *"Tonight's the night."*

The hitman named was a local plumber, who was arrested along with Bamber., both denied any such conversation had occurred. The plumber had a cast-iron alibi for that night, and both were released. In Mufgord's new statement, a month after her original statements, in which she did not mention these allegations, she further claimed that Jeremy had mentioned many times that he intended to kill his family.

And so, the spotlight having fallen on adopted son Jeremy Bamber remained. The police decided he was a cunning manipulator who loathed his adoptive parents and staged the massacre so that he could inherit the family farm and fortune. According to this narrative, Bamber climbed into the White House Farm on the night of 7th August, took one of his father's rifles, complete with a moderator also known as a silencer and embarked on the murders.

In essence the whole police case is built on one simple detail – that Bamber discovered that, with the silencer on the rifle, it would have been physically impossible for Sheila to have shot herself because her arms were simply not long enough to stretch to the trigger while holding the muzzle under her

chin. So, Bamber removed the silencer after killing Sheila, who he killed last and left the now shorter rifle, without silencer attached, on her chest. He then placed the silencer in the gun cupboard downstairs, the illusion of suicide was complete.

It is however this simple narrative that undermines the whole case, when carefully analysed and considered against what is known now. The Judge, quite correctly, stated that the murders were either carried out by Sheila Cafell or Jeremy, thereby ruling out a third-party involvement.

Given the brutal and frantic nature of the murders at the farm house it would be fair to assess that the killings took place when the killer was in some kind of frenzied or psychotic state. So, what was the mental background of the two suspects? Jeremy had no history of psychosis or mental illness, no drug or alcohol dependence, in fact Jeremy's mental health both then and now is considered stable and balanced.

However, the same could not have been said about Sheila, who was known to her friends and family as Bambi, she was admitted to hospital some five months prior to the mass murders, assessed on admission as having relapsed into an acute psychotic state, expressing bizarre religious and paranoid delusional thoughts. Her clinician Dr Ferguson assessed her as being a vulnerable person, who on her own admission was a user of cannabis and cocaine and with a schizophrenic disorder. Although he had no personal knowledge of Sheila showing violence, he accepted that her boyfriend recounts a violent episode and stated that someone in her condition, faced with what she regarded as real pressing fears, could respond with physical aggression directed to property, to herself or to others. And a close friend of Sheila's gave evidence at trial that in the weeks prior to her hospital admission she was talking "very strangely",

about suicide and the belief that she was a white witch and had to get rid of evil in the world and as far back as 1993 as having expressed fears of harming her children.

Jeremy has tried numerous times, all so far unsuccessful, to have his case overturned, one such appeal did look at a handwritten scrawl on a wall at the farm, which read *'I hate this place'*. This evidence was not considered at the trial as it had not been disclosed.

After a successful application to appeal, the Judges determined that even if Sheila had been the author of the scrawled words, it would be entirely consistent with the picture which the jury must themselves have formed of her from the evidence placed before them and said : *"It would have told them nothing new"*. But what is significant here must be that the Jury did not have this at the time to include in their consideration and therefore we cannot be sure how much significance they would have placed on such a statement when taken together with all the other mental illness issues known about Sheila.

In the judges summing up at trial his instructions to the Jury, were that they had to be sure, beyond all reasonable doubt that Sheila did not kill the members of her own house and then herself and if they decided she was not capable, then it must have been Jeremy.

However, when one asks the question, based solely on personalities and mental state, who had the present behaviour capable of carrying out this massacre, the answer for all to see is a simple one, it has to be Sheila.

But what of the crime scene, as an investigator this will always be key to solving any case. The initial examination of the scene was almost non-existent,

such was the view of the police, that they were dealing with a murder suicide. Little or no care was taken to preserve or secure evidence.

Astonishingly, a murder scene that should have been treated as a sterile area for forensic examination was well trodden by over 40 officers. I have shocking photographs of a police officer urinating in the garden and another posing for the camera having written their initials onto an area of the farms roof. The police on their own admissions even moved and touched crucial evidence before any photographs were taken.

What later became central to the prosecution's case at the trial, namely a moderator, was not seized at the time, but was in fact found a month after the murders by Jeremy's cousin David Bountflour who says whilst looking in the cupboard he found a moderator in a box in the cupboard , he was with Robert Bountflour and his sister Ann Eaton. David said he took it because he considered it '*of obvious significance*'. Ann took it to her house where David examined it and said he could see red paint and blood on it. He told the police and they collected the moderator and sent it for examination.

The prosecution case was that when Sheila was killed the gun had a moderator fitted, and this was evident for two reasons; that the injuries caused to Sheila's neck were as a result of the moderator coming into contact with her skin; and that it was not possible for her to have killed herself with the moderator on the gun because she could not have reached the trigger. The difference between the moderator on and/or off was some 6 1/2", so it certainly was possible for Sheila to have killed herself with the moderator off, but very unlikely if not impossible with the moderator on.

The defence case was that the moderator was not fitted at the time of the murders or when Sheila killed herself.

The prosecution case at trial was that the blood on the outside of the moderator, and in the grooves and deep down inside the silencer on the baffles, was matched to Sheila's A blood group, the same blood that is shared with 38% of the population.

But this evidence, used by the prosecution at trial, was even more damning, when forensic expert Mr Hayward stated that only Sheila's blood group, and nobody else's, was on the moderator. DNA testing was not available in 1986.

This forensic evidence was very persuasive, and you can see why the jury considered that the moderator was on the gun when Sheila was killed. With the addition of Mr Hayward's evidence, that the presence of Sheila's blood on and inside the moderator meant that it must have been on when she was shot, led to the conclusion that Jeremy must have shot her and then put the moderator in a box in the cupboard because Sheila could not have done it after shooting herself.

However, disclosure of documents post trial and with the advance in forensic science and the development of DNA testing the moderator tells a very different account; significantly the presence of an unknown male DNA.

Although known at the trial, but not disclosed to the defence, the blood grouping was **not** in fact unique to Sheila, but also matched another family member, namely Robert Bountflour.

Robert's DNA was sadly never taken, and he is now dead and therefore no tests have been run against the unknown male DNA.

Robert was present when the moderator was found in the cupboard, so given that we now know that the blood was not unique to Sheila's, it's possible it was Robert's, or perhaps even more likely just someone else with the same blood group.

To this day we still do not know who this unknown DNA belongs to.

My communication with Jeremy is very piecemeal, given that the Ministry of Justice refuse to allow me to speak to him on the phone, so it does make it difficult to properly explore some aspects of the case, which can only really be done with the ability to speak directly. But there is one element which I believe to be the most important aspect, that proves to me that Jeremy was wrongly convicted of the murders of five members of his family.

I have carefully examined the crime scene photographs that have been released and it's Sheila's body that gives up the most vital clues as to what happened that night. At the time of her death blood pattern analysis was not widely used and so did not form part of the prosecution case. It is one crucial element that in my opinion, Jeremy and his legal team need to peruse, because the blood disruption and the positioning of Sheila's body tells us exactly what happened.

Sheila's bed was fully made up and undisturbed, her body was in her parents' bedroom and lay prostrate on the floor beside and vertical to her parents' bed. The top of the left side of her head was up against the bedside cabinet, but slightly off to the right. Beside her on the floor and by her upper arm was an open bible, in a position that would be consistent with it having fallen when let

go of. The blood was located to specific areas of her upper body, neck and around her.

Photographs are vital in this case. In court the evidence given was that there was no blood on the soles of Sheila's feet, but this was not the case. From the photographs I have in my possession blood spatter is evident on her left foot, which would be entirely consistent with her having trodden in blood. This would suggest that a murder had been committed whilst she was alive and wandering around.

Lying on her chest with her right hand just above the trigger was the rifle that had been used to kill her father, mother and two children. The barrel of the rifle was just below her neck where there were two fatal shot wounds.

It is easy for a layperson to see two bullet holes and draw a conclusion that it would be impossible to shoot yourself twice. However, having two bullet holes close to each other, does occur in suicides where a weapon has a double trigger.

It is clear from the photographs that where she was found is the location in which Sheila was shot, she was not killed elsewhere and moved, nor was she standing when she was shot. In addition, and very significantly she had no trauma marks on her arms and showed no signs of a struggle having taken place.

Taking all of this into account ,for Jeremy to be guilty of Sheila's murder and therefore all the others, Jeremy must have been able to subdue and control Sheila enough to make her lie flat on the floor whilst he placed the rifle under and against her chin and then shooting her twice. Yes, it sounds highly improbable, because I believe it is exactly that.

We have one of the best criminal justice systems in the world and a jury system which is the fairest and best way to ensure the guilty are jailed and the innocent acquitted. That said, sometimes a jury and justice system can get it wrong, and there are many reasons for this. In my opinion, were this case to go to court today Bamber would have been found not guilty.

In fact it is my view, one clearly shared by the Doctor who attended the scene of the massacre at the Farm, and Essex police's most senior officers including the then Chief Constable Mr Bunyard and Head of Essex CID, Acting Detective Chief Superintendent Mike Ainsley that the tragic events that occurred in the early hours of the 7th August 1985 were that Sheila used the rifle without a moderator on, shot her parents, her children and then turned the gun on herself – it was a tragic murder suicide .

Mark Williams-Thomas MA - 2020