

# **Transcript of Michael Barrett Interview**

**Liverpool - September 1993**

## Introduction from Keith Skinner

“In September 1993, Martin Howells interviewed Mike Barrett on camera at Mike’s home in Liverpool. This was for Paul Feldman’s 1993 documentary, *The Diary Of Jack The Ripper*. In June 1994, I asked Paul Feldman whether it would be possible to see the full unedited interview – and was given a transcript of the session. James Johnston has formatted this transcript to make it more accessible to people who may be interested in reading the first known recorded interview with Mike Barrett. In places we have inserted our own punctuation for purposes of clarification and colour coded Mike and Martin. We have also **highlighted in green** those sections of the interview which are included in the final cut and given a direct link to the documentary.”

Michael Barrett (MB) interviewed in Liverpool  
by Martin Howells (MH) in September 1993

MH: When you first met Tony...tell us about Tony.

MB: Well it was roughly around 1987 and how that developed was I em Caroline my daughter, she's eleven now but she was roughly seven at that particular time, I'm a house husband for want of a better word, invalidity everything else. Anne works, and I used to take Caroline to school in the morning and collect her of an afternoon which was a quarter past three right well I've got to be [?].... and I'll tell no lies whatsoever I used to walk [?] nip in and have a pint beforehand in the Saddle pub always done that before I collect Caroline right, never drink of a night by the way, like a pint of the day but I never drink of the night.

Now having said all that, I met Tony Devereux we just struck up an acquaintance just a total acquaintance you know then over a couple of years 88, 89, 90 right before he had his accident, I struck up a three-year acquaintance with him and we become very good, good, good mates and what have you. I used to go and put on his bets for him yeh I mean literally I just put a bet on for him and what have you and vica versa he would put a bet on for me and that type of thing. So anyway, come Christmas 1990 which I emphasise, Christmas which is only one week before the following new year, Tony slipped outside his door and he ends up doing slipped...what do you call it er... a disk or what have you, hip yeah, a hip and everything so after that he was absolutely well knackered, shall we say in typical scouse language knackered. So, consequently all the following year now we're talking Christmas to

the following that's the January, the February, the March, that's the April, that's the May and what have you I used to go down every day of the week and I used to go down and I'd buy him his bread his milk and what have you. Now I don't ever want to say anything derogatory against Tony 'cos Tony was me mate no he was, he always was me mate.

**MH: Carry on Mike...so you were saying that he was your best mate.**

**MB: No, he was. You know three, three and a half years you know. So Tony ended up with this slipped hip you know the er the fractured hip for want of a better word or what have you consequently all that year something like the January the February the March the April the May I used to go down and Tony used to ring me up regular day by day Mike can you bring**

me a loaf of bread can you bring me a pint of milk and you know what I'm saying don't yer...and I always turned round and said "what harm's it? The poor one's in pain." You know and that's the way I look at it the poor lad was in pain you know and when I say by lad he was 60 years of age its just the way we use our expressions in Liverpool. So anyway I did. O.K. Tony got very cynical at the end of a certain point O.K. now I didn't know that he was going to die. I mean honestly I didn't know that he was going to die. I didn't know that he was going to have a massive heart attack in Walton hospital. That's something I didn't know in the slightest and everything. So, he got very cynical and this is where I get very reluctant because I never want to be offensive to the daughters because I don't think it's nice when a person gets cynical, but he did get cynical at the end of the day.

I used to say to him "away Tony stop lad, stop lad" you know "stop being so bloody cynical" you know "stop being that way towards your family". O.K. but he did get that way, and there's no question about it, you know, so to cut a long story short I ended up coming down about the May or the June I can't remember the date, and I emphasise I can't remember the date because well it's just impossible because you don't take notes. You know, I mean you just don't take notes. So I ended up, one day one afternoon going down with his bottle of bread...er bottle of milk sorry, pint of bread, you've got me all confused now. I'm sorry you've got me all confused now, with his bread and with his milk and his bottle of sherry and he [?] he turned round to me and he said "here you are Mick" and he always called me Mick by the way, he never called me Mike, he always called me Mick.

And he said to me "here, that's for you", I  
said "what the hell is it?" And he said "here  
you are, take it home and do something with  
it." I said "well what the hell is it?" He  
said "take it home and do something with it!"

Now it was a brown paper parcel O.K. and it  
was wrapped up and the brown paper was rather  
yellowish O.K. he give me it. O.K? So I come  
home that day Caroline is in the room with  
me, me daughter, O.K., I come home and I  
opened it O.K. And I skipped through the  
pages O.K. and I came to the last page but  
it's not the last page, I emphasise because  
there's no last page you know there's about  
five pages, six pages you know beforehand,  
it's got 'yours truly Jack the Ripper', and I  
thought what the...excuse me language, I  
won't say it but what the... are you playing  
at O.K. so I phoned him up immediately and I  
said "come on Tony tell me the truth, what  
are you playing at?" Tony said "I'm not".



So I asked him I said who knows. He says "I'm telling yer the truth". Now for several weeks later and I mean literally several weeks later I pressurised that man and I asked him question after question after question and Tony would never ever give me an answer.

MH: Has it ever crossed your mind why he would never give you an answer?

MB: Can we cut? Can we cut?

MH: Yes.

MB: Can we cut?

MH: Sure...Just say next time I can't answer that or I won't answer that and we'll get onto the next.

MB: I honestly don't want to answer that because of the daughters.

MH: I understand that. What I want to fill in is all of us have tried to fill in what kind of conversations you had with Tony. I mean were they short, did he say, "don't ask me anymore"?

MB: No, I've had a thousand, well nearly a thousand conversations with Tony. Well when I say a thousand I don't mean literally a thousand but what I mean is I've pressed him and I pressed him and I pressed him all the time and I kept on asking him, Tony what

happened and what have you. Now I know I'm on camera...but I quote, well I won't quote because it's very bad language, but I asked him who knows about it and it was no...alive today.

**MH: No person alive today.**

**MB:** Yeah no person alive today. O.K. and that's toning down the language, that's toning down the language. So after that as you all know the story I questions and I questioned and I questioned in the end I got no answers, so I come home, start sitting down and I start doing my own personal research. But at the same time I did not do it immediately. I must be honest with you because I just put the bloody diary and quote me on this because that diary has killed me here, and you know I've had a stroke because it really has

killed me. I put the diary to one side and I didn't really truly believe it and you can quote me on that. I honestly didn't believe it. At the beginning, but then again the more you read it the more you see there, and the more over I began to really and truly believe it. So I started doing me research and the more research I done the more I seemed to be getting nearer the truth. However, having said that Tony ended up dying in Walton hospital from a massive heart attack in between. That's not my fault. So I'm left with a diary that I'm not sure is 100% genuine.

MH: Did you at this stage know who had written the diary?

MB: No. Right. What happened was...

MH: Just start, "at this stage I didn't know".

MB: At that stage I didn't and what happened was I kept on looking throughout the library for Jack the Ripper, Jack the Ripper, Jack the Ripper. I was looking in all the books, Jack the Ripper, Jack the Ripper. Well the opening page of the diary has got 'Whitechapel Liverpool Whitechapel London', so I thought to myself "hang on a minute Mike stop," but this is after many months - I emphasise many months. Stop looking at Jack the Ripper and start looking at Liverpool murders. Right and I got a book out by Richard Whittington Egan. Right, and in that book, its got quite a lot of short stories, short stories, just very small short stories - Springheel Jack and everything else what have you, and I come across Florence Maybrick, the murder, right, I think it was

called Poison and Motive[?] if I'm not mistaken, and I come across that and then I come across that and I found Battlecrease House, which is very important - Battlecrease House. I suddenly realised Battlecrease House is in the diary. So consequently it had to be. So instead of looking for the Ripper I went all the way for James Maybrick, and this is what started to convince me.

**MH: Did you ever show any of these books to Tony Devereux?**

**MB: No. Well Tony Devereux was dead.**

**MH: Yeah. It's just that one of the daughters has apparently said that in fact she remembers that book Murder Mayhem and Mystery being**

lent to the younger daughter. Tony  
Devereux's.

MB: Well which daughter? Sorry.

MH: The younger one. I don't know the names. In  
other words that the book that you had which  
was your book.

MB: Are you trying to imply that Tony wrote it?

MH: No.

MB: Quite honestly, I don't think that he had the  
capability of writing it. I'm not being  
disrespectful to a friend.

MH: No, you didn't give the book to Tony Devereux to read when you were investigating it?

MB: Not to my knowledge. No.

MH: So, then you knew who James Maybrick was. He was the guy who write the journal.

MB: Well I'm 100% convinced put it that way. Well, as Shirley Harrison says, I quote Shirley Harrison, "you're never going to be 100% certain but we're all pretty certain, and we're all pretty certain."

MH: What did you do once you'd got this far?



MB: You mean as it went on? We're talking about August, September, October, November, December, January, February, April, and it's well on record O.K. what happened then? I didn't know what to do to be honest with you. I really was convinced that I owned the diary of Jack the Ripper, totally convinced but I didn't know what to do with it. I just totally didn't know what to do with it So, what I decided to do was look in the bookshelf and the bookshelf's there and you can film it and I looked in the bookshelf and I found Pan Books. So, I phoned Pan Books up and I said Listen, I really sincerely believe I own the diary of Jack the Ripper - however, I don't have 100% proof. I can't prove it. And they advised me, and I quote they advised me, they said we don't work it this way, we don't work it this way, you need an agent. emphasise an agent. So, I said "well where do I get one?" So, they turned round and said, "Doreen

Montgomery" and I quote - "Doreen Montgomery". So, I phoned Doreen up. And I phoned her up, and I said, look I really believe I've got the diary of Jack the Ripper, and they turned round and said to me, and she turned round and said to me, I say they, but you know what I mean, She turned round and said to me, Oh yer, I can't remember the exact words and what have you, but she said, "alright then, let's start talking", and I said, "O.K." On the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1992 I went to Doreen Montgomery's office and I met her. Now the first thing she did, and I quote, and its there and its on record, she took me to the British museum, and the first thing the historical documents expert at the British museum confirmed first of all it was genuine, not the genuine don't get me wrong there, it was a genuine Victorian book. Right. So, Doreen then

commissioned Shirley Harrison and after that well you all know the story.

**MH:** At the beginning you are saying you didn't believe the journal?

**MB:** Oh no. Oh come on. Can I ask you an honest question? Can I ask you an honest question? If I turned round to you and said, "Here you are mate, no offence that's the diary of Jack the Ripper", would you believe me?

**MH:** No.

**MB:** Well exactly.

MH: That must have meant that you did suspect that Tony must have forged it or knew who forged it?

MB: No. I didn't.

MH: At the time I mean.

MB: No. I didn't expect. I don't know truly.

Tony was never capable of forging. I  
honestly don't believe he was capable of  
forging. O.K. So Tony didn't forge it,  
where the hell did he get it from? Excuse my  
language.

MH: And that's obviously what you questioned him over. I remember when we had dinner, remember when I came down and met you for the first time I think we had dinner. I got the feeling that you were in a way trying to protect Tony then. Is that true?

MB: I've always protected Tony. Tony was me mate.

MH: Is that in fact because you do know...

MB: I'll ask you a question now. I'll ask you a question now and it's on camera and recorded and I bet you cut it. I bet you cut this question. Since this has all happened everybody, everybody that's the Times O.K. Australian press, TBS and your own company O.K. have all tried to break me, and have all

tried to break me, and have all tried to my  
story. I'll never change me story because  
when you're telling the truth you're telling  
the truth and you can quote me on that.

MH: I don't think we want to cut that Mike. I think that's the whole point isn't it? What I suppose people want to know and we can't get because Tony's dead is what he said to you. In other words, what your suspicions are about where it came from maybe a bit firmer than you are prepared to say.

MB: But then again. I'm going right back. Everybody wants to keep putting words in my mouth. Australian press have been wanting to put words in my mouth. Your company have been wanting to put words in my mouth. In fact everybody is putting words in my mouth.

And when I haven't got an answer I can't give you the words.

MH: You said to me once at that dinner, "Would you let a friend down?"

MB: No. I'd never let a friend down.

MH: No. What I'm saying is you challenged me. You said, "Would you let a friend down". You know, and I went away, and I thought about it and I thought, "What Mike is really trying to tell me is "I do know, but I'm not going to tell you." In other words...

MB: I would never let a friend down. I've just walked in the house, haven't I? Less than an hour and a half ago what do I carry? I carry the Standard. That's a matter of honour. You never let anybody down.

MH: What I'm saying, is there something that you would be letting Tony down if you did tell?

MB: No. Not in the slightest. No. No, not in the slightest. I never ever let Tony down in a million years and you're trying to put words in my mouth again. And there's no words in my mouth that I can put.

MH: Well that's fair enough. You were telling me too that you regret now that you ever had the diary.



MB: There's a fire there. You've seen the fire  
[/] ten times the diary would have been on  
the fire, for all the heart ache its put me  
through. I'll ask you a question. I'll ask  
you an honest question. I can have one pound  
in your pocket or you can have one million  
pounds in your pocket O.K., but can it buy  
you health? Well thank you very much because  
I've had a stroke in between and it can't buy  
you health. And all the money in the world  
can't buy you health. And I mean that. It  
just can't buy you health.

**MH: When did the pressure really start for you?**

MB: When? I think the pressure started eighteen  
months ago when I first had it. You see one  
of the things I've come across so far, in the  
years since I've had the diary, is  
scepticism, after scepticism, after

scepticism, after scepticism and everyone's always been totally and utterly been sceptic and, well I don't know 100% but I sincerely believe it from here.

MH: What was it that...what was the point that you became less sceptical and said I believe it?

MB: Battlecrease House. Once I found Battlecrease House. That was it. Once I found Battlecrease House.

MH: What are your feelings that maybe it did come from somewhere in Battlecrease House?

MB: I don't think it did. I honestly do think that it came from Knowlsey Buildings. I'll ask you a question. Can I smoke while I'm talking? Fine...I know that diary inside out. I've lived with it too bloody long. Right. "I curse Lowery, Lowery for making me rip." Now at first, being naive I thought "I curse Lowery for making me rip" meant Jack the Ripper making me rip, O.K. right, I looked at it and the more I read about it and the more I understood the book and what have you, "I curse Lowery for making me rip" and the more I done the research, I found out Lowery was James Maybrick's clerk. Right, so Lowery and you tell me the odds and I'm asking you a question. You tell me the odds. What's the odds on Lowery's going to Battlecrease House? When he's a clerk. Just give me the straight odds. Just tell me the straight odds.

MH: If it's a forged document then the odds don't come into it. It's a fact he knows because he's done his research. Do you see what I mean?

MB: How can you say its forged? I'm telling you its genuine.

MH: No, but that's what the question is always about. If it's not 100% genuine then it could be forged, so therefore the forger is...

MB: Alright, imagine it's genuine then. Stop for a second imagine it's genuine. Right, so what's the odds of Lowery going to Battlecrease House as a clerk employed by James Maybrick? What's the odds?

MH: He'd go there on business, letters and stuff...

MB: "I curse Lowery for making me rip". The first few pages of the document, I don't know how many exactly have been ripped out. That's how Lowery, Lowery found this. Where was the diary found? It was found in Knowsley Buildings in Liverpool and I can prove, well I can't prove, no I can't prove. But Knowesley Buildings was only knocked down, and I've got a photograph and everything in 1969.

MH: And in fact, that's quite near the Liverpool Post buildings isn't it?

MB: Exactly.

MH: Do you think Tony's maybe had it that long then? Has it been hidden that long?

MB: I don't know. With Tony I've never known. I've never known in a million years. With Tony I've never known in a million years. But you keep asking me questions that I can't answer. I only know that I've lived with this diary for so long its untrue, and I'm convinced it was done...

MH: You can't be surprised though that the questions that can't be answered, that's why people are...

MB: Look.

MH: Sceptical, aren't they because they need to know the answers.

MB: You're going to have me on video. You're going to do this, and you can quote me on this and you can quote me I don't care a damn what anybody says. Everybody is going to come at me and ask me is it a forgery? Is it this, is it that? I've got no answers what so ever. I just don't know. I haven't got the foggiest answer and I'm sorry, I won't swear but you can all go and get...because I don't have an answer, and I really don't, I really don't. So, where do I go from here?

MH: No, I think a lot of people believe you when you say that. I can see how it's become a pressure for you. Its like when they've investigated the journal...and they think maybe they've got a clue that someone's forgotten about.

MB: Well you tell me then, how many experts have been on the diary?

MH: Lots aren't there.

MB: How many?

MH: Thirty? forty? I don't know.

MB: Forty experts. Has anybody found a fault in the diary yet?

MH: There are people who say they've found faults.

MB: But has anybody found a proper fault, like a proof?



MH: No.

MB: No! Right, do you believe in the bible?

MH: Not particularly. No.

MB: You don't believe in the bible?

MH: No.

MB: Do you believe in God?

MH: Yes.

MB: You believe in God.

MH: My personal God, yes.

MB: Your personal God. Can you prove...?

POSSIBLY A RECORDING MISSING?

MB: The constant names. Right, there was Michael, that's the brother but I didn't know that at the time. Bobo, Gladys what have you, I didn't know that at the time. I didn't know who Bobo was, I didn't know who Gladys was and what have you, so that was all confusing and everything. Oh yes, there was many a thing that crossed me mind throughout the whole diary. I give my name you know the history do tell what love can do to a gentleman born yours truly Jack the Ripper and I thought to myself well why hasn't he signed it? and It's dated the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of May. That crossed me mind. There's a million things that crossed me mind. But I couldn't prove any of it. I didn't know who the

people were in any way, shape or form until I found Battlecrease House. That's all it comes down to, so you're asking me a question and you've asked me a question that's what's crossed me mind, yes, a thousand things crossed me mind. Lowery, why did "he make me rip"? I thought Lowery made him rip literally meaning Jack the Ripper, but he didn't make him rip the diary because Lowery must have found the diary in Knowesley Buildings. So, you are asking me questions there that I'm telling the honest truth, so I can't say no more than that.

**MH: Do you think that Florence murdered James Maybrick?**

**MB: Yes.**

MH: You do?

MB: I always have done. I always have done.  
I've always thought that. Yeh. I've always  
felt that.

MH: And supposedly why? What was her motive?

MB: What was her motive? Because he bloody  
well...sorry. he confessed, he confessed  
that he was Jack the Ripper. Well put it  
this way, I'm a married man, I'm a married  
man. Everyone else is a married man and put  
it this way - would you like to know that you  
married Jack the Ripper? Well, would you  
like to know?...no exactly. Would you admit  
it? Imagine if you were female. Would you  
admit that you married Jack the Ripper? You  
would not admit it in a million years, would

you? And that's why, I reckon she killed him. But that's only me own gut feelings.

MH: Well he does say...

MB: But I can't prove it...I can't prove it...I can't prove it...

MH: What does he say? What's the words in the journal, can you remember?

MB: I confess. I confess. I can't remember the exact words because I haven't got the journal in front of me and what have you. yeh, yeh, yeh er I and there's the whoring master by the way, and the whoring bitch, and quote me the whoring master and the whoring bitch right the way through the diary and it's only on the last pages of the diary that they turn

round and say, or he says rather, to be precise you know, I have confessed all. Now, if she knew it, if she knew it and it's all, I know, it's all...I can't think of the word...ss...I can't think of the word...s..sumption

**MH: An assumption, yeh?**

**MB: Yeh. I know it's all an assumption, but at the same time I'm absolutely, totally convinced that she knew. Totally convinced. I'm not going to change my mind in a million years.**

**MH: He says. He says Bunny knows all.**

MB: Yeh. That's it. And that's what makes me convinced. Totally convinced and what have you. Yeh.

INTERVIEW PRESUMABLY ENDS

'THE DIARY OF JACK THE RIPPER: BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT?' (1993) Michael Barrett interview timecode references:

(1) "I struck up a three-year acquaintance with him and we become very good, good, good mates" (06:52)

(2) "I used to go down every day of the week [...] with his bread and with his milk and his bottle of sherry and [I ended up going down there this particular one day] and he turned round to me and he said "here you are Mick [...] here, that's for you", I said "what the hell is it?" [...] "take it home and do something with it." I said "well what the hell is it?" He said "take it home and do something with it!" (06:59)



(3) So I started doing me research and the more research I done the more I seemed to be getting nearer the truth. However, having said that Tony ended up dying in Walton hospital from a massive heart attack in between [...] So I'm left with a diary that I'm not sure is 100% genuine. (08:38)

(4) Tony was never capable of forging. I honestly don't believe he was capable of forging. O.K. So Tony didn't forge it, where the hell did he get it from? (09:13)

(5) I pressurised that man and I asked him question after question after question and Tony would never ever give me an answer. (09:52)

(6) I bet you cut this question. Since this has all happened everybody, everybody that's the Times O.K. Australian press, TBS and your own company O.K. have all tried to break me, and have all tried to break me, and have all tried to my story. I'll never change me story because when you're telling the truth you're telling the truth. (10:37)

Link to full documentary: [The Diary of Jack the Ripper: Beyond Reasonable Doubt? \(1993\)](#)