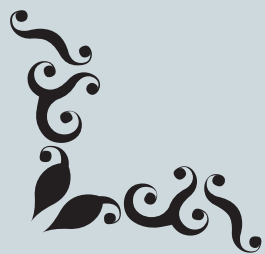


**Cover Story** The Bamber murders



Jeremy Bamber has spent 25 years behind bars for murdering his family. He has always denied he did it — and believes shocking new evidence could prove his innocence. For the first time the Ministry of Justice has allowed him to give a face-to-face interview. David James Smith visits him at his high-security prison to unravel the truth behind that fateful night

# AND BY DAWN THEY WERE ALL DEAD



The victims, right: Jeremy Bamber's sister, Sheila, known as Bambi. Left: his parents, Nevill and June. Far left: Sheila's twin boys, Daniel (left) and Nicholas



**Right: Bamber, 24, is arrested in September 1985. Far right: clutching his girlfriend Julie Mugford's hand at his family's funeral**

Tuesday was not a normal day for ordinary visitors, so the visiting room at HMP Full Sutton, a high-security prison just outside York, was deserted as the door opened at the far end of the room and a lone prisoner entered. I had been offered any seat in the house, but had already decided we would sit in the private conference room just off the main area, with the low table and the chairs — all bolted to the floor.

Jeremy Bamber is nervous, a faint tremor visible as we shake hands and say hello. Not surprising really. It has taken months to reach this moment, and I have jumped through many hoops to make it happen, layer after layer of permissions have been necessary, up through the highest echelons of government. Now it is finally on, and Bamber has one chance over the next few hours to make his case as an innocent man, as is his right, in the proper circumstances, as a convicted prisoner claiming to be the victim of a miscarriage of justice. Bamber has protested his innocence from the moment of his arrest 25 years ago, but only now has the Ministry of Justice allowed him to give a face-to-face interview in prison, while the Criminal Cases Review Commission considers whether he should be allowed a new appeal.

**M**any prisoners claim to be innocent, and some are, of course, but not most of them. Bamber is unique. He is one of only 38 convicted killers in the country who have been given a whole-life tariff, which means they will never be released. There are some familiar names on the list: Ian Brady, Donald Neilson, Rosemary West, Levi Bellfield, Peter Tobin... and Jeremy Bamber. So far as I can ascertain, he is the only one of the 38 who claims to be innocent.

He just passed a remarkable milestone. As of last autumn, he has now spent more time in prison than out of it. He was 24 when he first went into custody, in autumn 1985. Now he has spent nearly 25 years locked up, most of them as a Category-A high-risk prisoner, of which more later.

Was that milestone a significant moment for him? "It was not a day I marked," he says drily. I ask what he misses from outside and he says, eyes welling with tears, that he doesn't know because he has forgotten what outside was like. He has served his sentence one day at a time, he says, because that is the only way you can, working in the Braille shop, translating books for the blind (the last book, about a transported convict, made him cry) and teaching literacy to fellow prisoners. The dehumanising effect of prison can be mind-numbing, he says eloquently, in a sudden burst of



articulacy that reminds you of his middle-class origins and his days as a boarder at Gresham's public school. Not an ordinary prisoner, not an ordinary man. He was convicted of murdering his entire immediate family, all five of them, including two small boys, the twins. The day I visited him, weirdly, would have been their 31st birthdays.

He will be 50 in January and looks his age, in sharp contrast to the fine-boned, haughty youth in photographs of 25 years ago. He is jowly, porky, his hair tinged with grey. His upper body muscles suggest years of lifting weights in prison gyms, but his general appearance is sagged, middle-aged and tired. He wears baggy blue denims, black trainers and a red Lonsdale T-shirt. He has brought with him three folders from his precious box of 35 folders that contain the key elements of his case for innocence.

That box is culled from two floor-to-ceiling towers of boxes that he keeps in his cell. About 100,000 pieces of A4, he reckons. There are many more thousands with his supporters on the outside. He has a small band of very loyal supporters, some of them women, who have come over to his cause.

Right then. Deep breath. This won't be pretty. This is what happened, that night, the night of August 6, 1985, a quarter of a century ago.

Bamber called the Essex police in the early hours of August 7. He did not dial 999, but rang through to the local station at Chelmsford, at around half-three.

"You've got to help me," he said. "My father has rung me and said, 'Please come over. Your sister has gone crazy and has got the gun.'"

Then the line went dead. Jeremy said he tried calling back but could not get a reply.

The Bammers were wealthy arable farmers in the Essex village of Tolleshunt D'Arcy. Jeremy's parents, Nevill and June, lived at White House Farm, and were being visited that weekend by their daughter, Sheila, from London, with her six-year-old twins, Nicholas and Daniel. Sheila had been treated for depression and recently diagnosed with schizophrenia. Her mother had been treated for depression, too. At different times they had been patients at the same private psychiatric hospital. June had a bit of religious mania and upset the twins' father, Colin Caffell, by regularly making the boys kneel and pray





with her. Sheila, too, was sometimes intensely religious and could be delusional, her illness sometimes leading to angry or violent outbursts.

Sheila had worked a little as a model and was known as Bambi. She and Jeremy were adopted, from different natural parents. They both had awkward relationships with Nevill and June, Jeremy sometimes seeming lazy and grasping. Sheila and Jeremy did not always get on, but could be close, and Jeremy told me how they had smoked dope together at a party just a few days before the deaths. He had not known then, he said, of the link between cannabis and schizophrenia, or the effect of the former on the latter. He has had plenty of time, since, in prison, he said, to observe schizophrenics at close quarters. He himself has never had any diagnosis of anything untoward. He is not a psychopath, he does not have any notable personality disorders. Either he is exceptionally — impossibly? — clever and manipulative and has fooled every expert for 25 years, or he is, as he claims, just like the rest of us.

Jeremy had been with his family at the farm earlier that evening. He had taken a gun outside

the house to shoot some rabbits, but the rabbits had scarpered, so he had returned to the house and left the .22 Anschutz rifle — the murder weapon — propped against a wall inside when he went home to the nearby village of Goldhanger, where he lived in a house owned by his parents.

The police turned out in response to his call and firearms officers were called. The first patrol car overtook Jeremy driving more slowly along the road to the farm. The telephone receiver was off the hook and BT was able to open the line to the house. All they could hear at that stage was a dog barking.

The police finally went in through the kitchen at 7.45am. The first body they found there was Nevill's, still wearing his pyjamas. He had been shot eight times and his further injuries and the disarray in the room suggested there must have been a life-and-death struggle between him and his killer. He was in a chair, slumped forward,

suggested Sheila had shot her family — all except Jeremy — and then herself. That was what the officer in charge of the initial inquiry, DCI Taff Jones, believed from the outset and continued to believe to the exclusion of all else.

Jones conducted a bare minimum of forensic inquiry and returned the house keys to the family after two days so that Jeremy's cousins David Boutflour and Ann Eaton could go in and have a clean-up. David and Ann's father, Robert, was there too that day. He was married to June Bamber's sister Pamela. (Robert is now in his nineties and suffering from Alzheimer's.) Nowadays, of course, the property would be sealed for weeks and the forensic inquiries would be painstaking, but in the 1980s, senior officers were often a law unto themselves, and once they — some of them — had made their minds up, that was that. It was, Bamber pointed out to me, the days of *Life on Mars*, the drama that

## WHILE BAMBER BEGAN LIVING IT LARGE AFTER THE KILLINGS, HIS RELATIVES QUICKLY BECAME SUSPICIOUS. THEY WATCHED HIM CAREFULLY FOR SIGNS OF SUSPECT BEHAVIOUR

his head at rest in the coal scuttle. Upstairs, the twins had been shot in the room they shared together. Five bullets in the back of the head to Daniel and three to Nicholas.

June was on her bed in the main bedroom, in her nightdress. She had been shot seven times, twice in the head, at least some of the wounds while she was upright. There was a lot of blood. On the floor beside her was Sheila, also in her nightdress. She had two wounds to her throat. There was a Bible on the floor next to her. The rifle lay across her chest, pointing up at her throat.

Nobody was ever able to say in what order the victims had died, but everything about the scene

depicted the bad old ways of policing. (He has seen the show on TV in prison, and loves it.)

For many years Bamber has hinted at what he is now overtly claiming. He told me he believes his cousins, motivated by the £400,000 estate, manufactured evidence against him, perjured themselves in court and conspired with the police to have him convicted and do him out of his inheritance. Bamber was disinherited on conviction and the estate passed to the Boutflours. He believes David Boutflour might "admit" his part in this conspiracy and wrote to him not long ago asking him to "play the white man" and be honest about ➤➤➤

what had happened. Boutflour ignored the letter and insisted to me when we met that there was no conspiracy, no perjuring, no fit-up.

Ann Eaton moved into the farm not long after the murders and still lives there with her family. Bamber told me he thought she was a “sick puppy” for doing that. Eaton would not talk to me for this article — indeed, after I wrote her a polite letter I received a “warning” call from an Essex police detective superintendent asking me to leave her alone, which I did — but David Boutflour was generous and spoke to me at length. It is clear he doesn’t understand his sister’s actions either. How could she? Boutflour told me he knew Ann’s children had suffered nightmares. As well you might. Bamber said she was “as cold as ice”.

At the very least, the killings created lasting schisms across the family, mostly to do with money and inheritance. A third, more distant cousin, Anthony Pargeter, has waged his own long legal struggle against the estate, to claim what he believes is his share. I was told he had suffered his own mental anguish as a result.

**B**amber was downgraded some years ago from a Category-A prisoner to Category-B, meaning he was not such a risk of escape and his conditions could be slightly relaxed. He was upgraded again to Cat-A, apparently after his cousins complained, having received guidance from Essex police on how they might make their feelings about his change of status known. It was apparent he feels very resentful about that. Of course the police advice might be seen as perfectly proper, but Bamber insists the cousins were simply being vindictive.

While Bamber began living it large after the killings, spending money on holidays, meals and drinks for him and his girlfriend, 21-year-old Julie Mugford, and other friends, his relatives — Ann, David and their father, Robert — quickly became suspicious. They doubted Sheila was capable of the shootings and watched Bamber carefully for signs of suspect behaviour, imagining all kinds of fancy theories about how he might have got to and from the farm undetected, using a bicycle to get there and a small unlatched window to gain entry.

During the clean-up on August 10, by his own account David Boutflour picked up some ammunition that was lying around and went to return it to the gun cupboard where he found hidden away the sound moderator — we can call it the “silencer” — of the murder weapon. It was sticky as if it had been hurriedly cleaned, and appeared to show spots of blood and flecks of red paint, and a single hair.

Boutflour told me: “I remember some things like it was yesterday. I remember finding the silencer. He’s suggesting that we fraudulently shoved the paint and the blood in to make it appear he had done it. Well, that’s a load of rubbish. What would be the point? There was enough evidence anyway. What an absolute load of piffle.”

## SCENE OF THE CRIME

This picture (right), taken in the kitchen of the Bamber family home shortly after the murders, was examined by the photographic expert Peter Sutherst. Sutherst claims to have established that the mantelpiece above the Aga was unmarked, yet at the trial the prosecution had produced photographs taken a month later that showed scratches in the red paint.

The police claimed that these marks had been made by the silencer attached to the rifle scratching the red paint during a violent struggle between Bamber and his father, Nevill, whose body was found in the kitchen. Red paint matching the mantelpiece was found on the silencer.

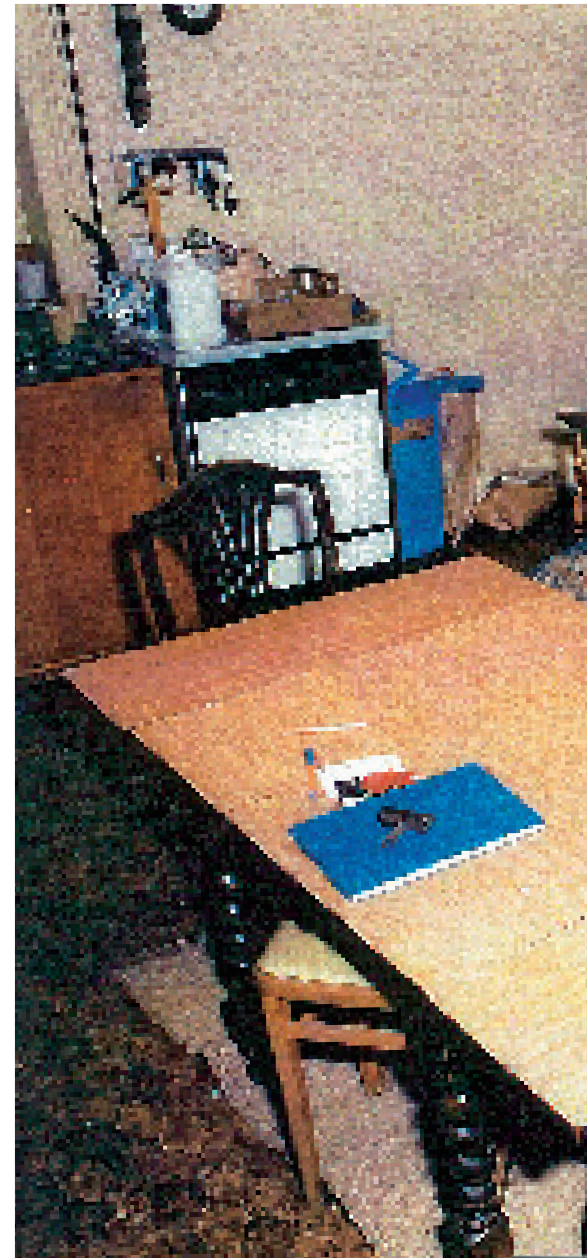
Bamber claims that this evidence was faked. If the scratches had been made, there would have been flecks on the floor to prove it, he says, yet Sutherst could not find a single fleck in his study of the crime-scene photographs. Bamber claims to have tested his theory in prison with the help of a wooden prison footrest.

He says that the scratch marks were deliberately made to incriminate him later, all part of a plan to frame him for the murders and ensure that he did not receive his rightful inheritance. His cousin David Boutflour dismisses his claim as ‘absolute piffle’ ■

The Boutflours did not call the police as soon as the find was made, but took the silencer back to Ann Eaton’s home. The police were eventually notified, and did finally collect it, two days later. The officer recalled seeing the hair, but didn’t know what happened to it. It vanished. Eventually, the silencer was sent for forensic examination.

The blood evidence was inconclusive, but the paint matched the underside of the shelf above the Aga in the kitchen. There were fresh scratches on the shelf, so it seemed likely the silencer had been on the gun during the struggle between Nevill and his killer. If the silencer was on the gun at the time of the shootings, the gun became too long for Sheila to put the nozzle at her throat and still reach the trigger. It was not credible to imagine her killing everyone else before removing the silencer, going downstairs, putting the silencer back in the cupboard, going back up to the bedroom and then shooting herself. If the silencer was genuine evidence, the killer could not have been Sheila, Bamber’s story of the phone call was a lie, and he must have been the killer.

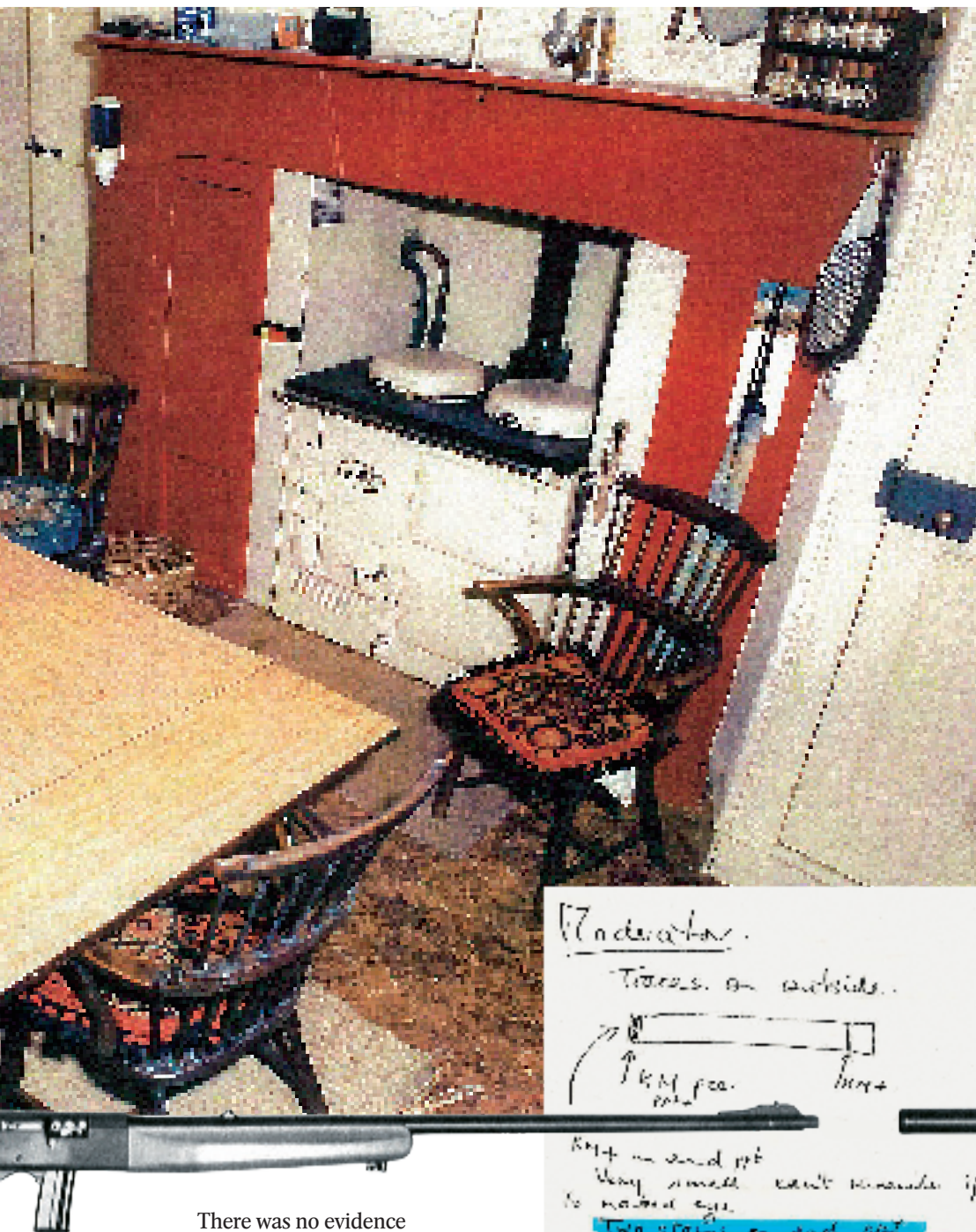
Bamber’s relationship with Mugford came under strain and they split up. A month after the



killings, Mugford was having a heart-to-heart with a girlfriend, Lizzie Rimgton, who told her what a rogue Jeremy was, as he had slept with her while he was with Mugford. That night, as Mugford admitted in court, she tried to smother Bamber with a pillow, ready to kill him. The next day she went to the police and told them he had hired a hit man to carry out the killings. The hit man was a local character and soon dismissed with an alibi.

Mugford was interviewed about 30 times and later testified in court — and in an article in the News of the World for which she was alleged to have been paid £25,000 — that Bamber had told her before and after of what he intended to do and had done. He had called her that night — “tonight’s the night” — around the time he had called the police. He said he had called her to tell her about the distressing call from his father.

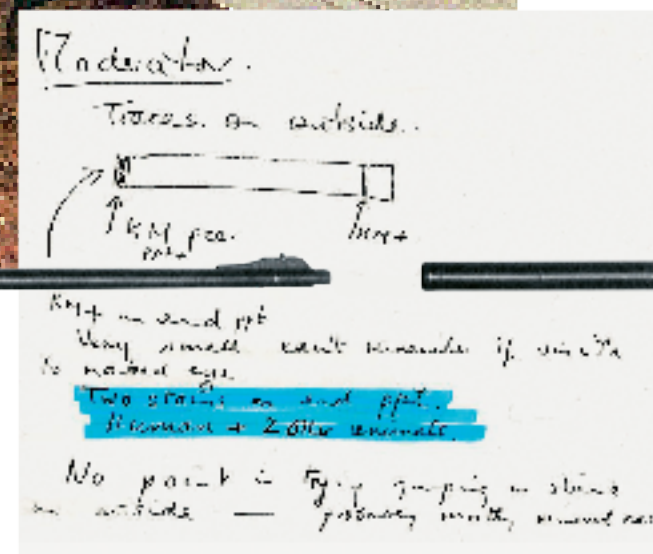




There was no evidence to support his claim that the call from his father had ever been made. It was his word against the prosecution's.

Bamber, of course, argued that Mugford was motivated by revenge, but the jury must have believed her too, in spite of her own history of dishonesty: she had carried out a cheque fraud with a girlfriend, helped Jeremy in the bizarre burglary of the family caravan park he co-owned, and participated in his small-time growing and selling of cannabis — a bit of petty crime that was unknown to the police.

Bamber was convicted on a majority verdict after two days of deliberation by the jury. He has campaigned relentlessly ever since, failed at two appeals and at any number of attempts to succeed in complaints' inquiries against the police. He is now awaiting a response from the Criminal Cases Review Commission, which could give him one more chance at the court of appeal, if they think his case has merit. The commission



## THE FIRST BODY THE POLICE FOUND WAS NEVILL'S, IN THE KITCHEN. THERE HAD BEEN A LIFE-AND-DEATH STRUGGLE BETWEEN HIM AND HIS KILLER. HE HAD BEEN SHOT EIGHT TIMES

is still ploughing through Bamber's many recent submissions, and cannot say when it will produce its findings, but it could be in the next few weeks.

Julie Mugford moved to Canada and turned her life around. She became a teacher and is now a senior official in a regional education authority. She did not respond when I invited her to talk to me. Jeremy told me he has never written to her and asked her to "play the white woman".

Below: the murder weapon, similar to the rifle shown here, is at the centre of Bamber's campaign to prove his innocence. It was found lying across Sheila's body, the silencer was elsewhere. Bamber has built up thousands of pieces of 'evidence', including this original note from the forensic study of the silencer

Tears again welled in his eyes as he said he had not deserved what she had done to him. "She should never have gone to the police, but she didn't know what she was doing. She didn't realise the consequences of making those allegations and starting the ball rolling."

He believes once she had started she couldn't stop and had to keep the lies going. Of course he calls them lies, but the jury seems to have accepted them as the truth.

"I've lived with people for 25 years now who have killed people and attacked people and done awful, awful things for so little.

Because people's emotions when you're talking about love... Julie had always said to me, if you sleep with Lizzie, I'll kill you."

Bamber told me that after his initial arrest the senior officer Taff Jones came to him and said, "that Julie's full of shit". Bamber thought he would be able to go and speak to Julie. "I thought I'd say to her, what was all that about? I didn't realise I'd so upset you that you'd be prepared to lie. But she had gone into protective custody by then, and once I'd come to jail I knew that she would never, ever go back, as everything, all her career, her whole life in Canada would come crashing down for

the lies she could never go back on."

Jones sounds a marvellous character, straight out of central casting. When David Boutflour, Ann Eaton and Anthony Pargeter went to raise their suspicions of Bamber with him, he was having none of it. Eaton was dubbed an interfering Miss Marple. Boutflour recalled the meeting for me and how Pargeter had said they really weren't pointing the finger at ➤➤➤

anybody, but they didn't think it was Sheila, and Jones had stood up and said, I'm not listening to this rubbish, out you go! Eaton had persisted and he had again stood up, I'm going to have to ask you to leave. He wasn't going to listen to a lot of old nonsense.

Some junior detectives doubted it was Sheila, but they couldn't speak to Jones either. Eventually he was effectively overruled and other senior officers took charge. Jones went home and was up a ladder doing house repairs when he fell and suffered injuries that eventually led to his death, on May 11, 1986. It's more than a little coincidental that the only officer who always believed Bamber's account of events should have died in a freak accident, but there is nothing obviously untoward in the incident, which I investigated thoroughly. It was without doubt a genuine accident, as the inquest into Jones's death confirmed.

**A**bout 10 months ago, Bamber was poring over a particular crime-scene photograph in his cell. He suddenly wondered why he had never seen flecks of red paint on the floor around the Aga, beneath the scratches supposedly made on the shelf above the cooker during the struggle that led to his father's death. He and a fellow prisoner — "he would love me to name him, but I'm not going to" — carried out some tests of their own on a red-painted footrest in the workshop, using a sharp edge to make a scratch and of course sending a shower of paint flecks to the floor. "I said, 'Look, you can't miss them, even if it is just one... but there's not a single one in these photographs.'"

If there were no paint flecks beneath the Aga, what did that mean? It could mean that no scratch had been made at the time the photograph was taken, immediately after the killings. But there were definitely scratches later, so who had made them and when, if not the killer, during the struggle?

He needed the photographs examined by an expert, so his solicitor, Barry Woods, called Kodak, and they said he wanted Peter Sutherst, who had written the police manual on crime-scene photography. Sutherst had calculated precisely where and how long the scratch was and where it ought to appear on the shelf in that picture, protruding 2.5 centimetres into the image. And that there was nothing there... no flecks on the floor and now no scratch either. If that was true, it was a dramatic twist in a 25-year-old case.

Bamber has now gone one step further and created a chain of documents, which he claims shows the relatives never found the moderator during their clean-up two days after the killings, but in fact it was not found until a month later, shortly after Julie Mugford had come forward to put Bamber in the frame. The detail of the documents is mind-bogglingly complicated, and there is not enough time or space to make sense of them here. That, happily, is the job of



the Criminal Cases Review Commission.

Bamber claims that David Boutflour found the silencer on September 11, not August 10, and was "prevailed upon" to engage in a conspiracy and backdate it. Boutflour, of course, says this is nonsense, and everything happened just as he said it did at the time and repeated in court. "Just to put it clearly," Boutflour said at the end of our meeting, "I have never had any doubts that Jeremy is guilty."

It must be said that, for Bamber to be telling the truth, the scale of the lies and the conspiracy against him would be immense. And yet there are numerous other anomalies in the case that

## BAMBER BELIEVES HIS COUSINS, MOTIVATED BY THE £400,000 ESTATE, CONSPIRED WITH POLICE TO HAVE HIM CONVICTED AND MANUFACTURED EVIDENCE TO DO HIM OUT OF HIS INHERITANCE

make you wonder at the probity of the conduct of the police, in particular around the events of the night. An officer outside the house before the armed entry began saw a gun propped against a window, which was not there when the police went in, so must have been moved. The wireless log reports of the first officers who entered the house said there were two bodies, a man and a woman, in the kitchen, yet there was only one, afterwards, Nevill Bamber.

Jeremy believes Sheila was the other "body", still alive downstairs and that she then roused herself and went upstairs to shoot herself. Then, too, there is that open telephone line and, according to the police log, a sound recording was made. The recordings have never been disclosed and cannot be traced by Bamber and his legal team. He was told quite recently that they had been taped over as a matter of routine, which does sound highly implausible. He claims to wonder what they might disclose about what went on at the house when, if he was the killer, everyone should already have been long dead. He says too that there is some evidence in a log — which I have not seen — that suggests his father tried to call the police before he called Jeremy. Did that call to Jeremy ever happen? He could be making the call up; he could be making the whole thing up, knowing he was the one who shot his family.

**House of horror:**  
White House Farm in Essex. One of Bamber's cousins moved into the house not long after the killings took place

Bamber has tried to interest Essex police in an inquiry into possible criminal behaviour by his relatives — perverting the course of justice, as the allegation would be — and has been told an officer is making preliminary inquiries, though no "investigation", as yet.

I ask him how he can sit in jail if he is innocent, how he can do the time, believing his relatives fitted him up. How does he deal with the feeling of injustice? He says — and this will upset his relatives, as they think he is being two-faced about his parents — that he wants his dad to be proud that he has been able to stay and fight his case. "I've seen many a person get very bitter and angry and drive themselves crazy with the anger and the revenge. They're all so negative. I mean, call me clever, call me strong, call me arrogant, call me whatever you like, but I know, because I've been down that road, that it's destructive and painful to let those things get to you."

The thought of still being inside next January, when he turns 50, was agonising, but then again, he tended to have an optimistic streak and imagined he was coming out any minute, just as

soon as those appeal-court judges realised how wrong it all was, his conviction. He had otherwise tried to keep his head down and get on with his sentence. Not always easy when you are notorious. He had been in a knife fight once and got slashed in the neck, many years ago, and more recently had been slashed on the landing.

"This place is full of nutters. These things happen." For himself, he was not one of those nutters, he was just normal. No need to apologise or explain. He felt emotion just like anyone else, and cried like anyone else.

I worried about those tears. I wondered if they were real and what he really felt. I looked and looked at his face and tried to prod and provoke different reactions. I could not say I ever felt overtly manipulated, but of course I just may not have noticed it was happening.

I had said on the way in that I feared I would find him repulsive, but in the event, I found him all too human and understandable. Except for the part of him that I felt was hidden. The corner of his soul that carried the knowledge of what had really happened that night 25 years ago, and who really had killed his family.

He knows the truth. And he is the only person in the world who does.

Was it Sheila? Was it Jeremy?

Reader, I have no idea ■