

June 1999

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

THE C&D CLUB MEETING - 10th April 1999

One of the hopes of this meeting for many people (but not myself as I felt quietly confident that it would change little) was that the provenance of the JTR Diary would, once and for all, be put to rest, with **Michael Barrett** providing the ultimate proof of how he, himself, forged the artefact. This did not happen. In talking with Mike after his interview it became plain that he actually believed that this *had* happened. The fact of the matter was that the majority of the audience went away unable to accept that **Mike Barrett** could possibly have forged the Diary. Throughout his interview with **Keith Skinner** he sidestepped, with extreme craftiness, every question put to him, and in fact, did not give a satisfactory answer to any one of those questions.

Keith himself did a magnificent job in trying to keep the interview on a forward trajectory, but he was fighting a losing battle with Mike's determination to dominate the whole proceedings. I overheard one Club member whisper "...he's such a wide-boy, but he's not clever enough..."

It was interesting to watch the faces of the audience as they began to raise eyebrows, shake heads, hide yawns and become bored as they began to realise they were being talked at by a conman. A repeated phrase was "...I want you to understand - that is a FACT...", yet we were expected to believe that only because **Mike Barrett** himself said so.

There was no proof of anything presented this evening. Here was a major opportunity for **Michael Barrett** to present his case of forging the Diary, and yet, even though he was adamant that he had proof, when asked to produce it he was unwilling to do so and thought it unnecessary to bring it. He simply expected the audience to take his word on trust. His word. From a man who has made and retracted so many statements as to make 'his word' unbelievable. And yet he clearly believed himself that he had convinced the audience of his ability to carry out this forgery, and that they were convinced that he had created the Diary.

There was one wonderful moment of pure entertainment when **Michael** tried to explain away his 'messing up' of diamine ink by adding sugar to it, and not being able to explain just how this actually 'messed it up'. "Simple", he said! Another of his cop-out expressions.

The climax that abruptly ended the evening came when **Dave Cuthbertson**, with a certain amount of understandable anger, accused **Mike** of suggesting that the audience, who obviously thought themselves so clever, should be able to prove for themselves that he forged the Diary and that he shouldn't have to produce the evidence himself. During the interview, **Mike Barrett** had been more than content to use his daughter **Caroline's** name as a witness to the forgery of the Diary, yet when **Dave** merely mentioned her name in passing **Mike's** reaction was instantaneous - he wrenched off his microphone, leapt off the stage shouting at **Dave** "You talk about my **Caroline** and I'll kick your fucking balls through the fucking wall". This outcome was thankfully prevented, but the incident amply summed up the character and personality of someone who had sworn that he has never assaulted his wife and daughter and is a peaceful, non-violent man, and this incident happened before the entire audience of *The Cloak and Dagger Club* meeting.

The final result of this meeting at which it was hoped to clear up the provenance of the Diary once and for all was that it has been left in possibly more confusion than before. Nevertheless it was a fascinating evening and will certainly go down in 'Ripper-folklore' history, for one reason or another.

If **Michael Barrett** reads this, I apologise to him if he feels I have been speaking out of turn or behind his back, but these things could not be said to him in person for in my meetings with him he simply did not leave an opening to get into his one-sided conversation. Any questions or comments were heavily overridden with evasions and bluster.

I must apologise to those readers who are unaware of the situation that has brought about the second of my comments for this edition of *Ripperologist* as they are of a more personal nature. As Editor of *Ripperologist* I try to keep my own opinions and beliefs away from the main body of the magazine (unless I am reviewing a book), but this is the one place where I can put forward my true feelings, and that is what I use it for.

In brief, the review in the February issue by **Adam Wood** of **Stephen Wright's** *JTR: An American View* caused **Mr Wright** so much distress that he sent off a string of letters, many to myself, and some to other Members of the C&D Club, even to other writers, in deep defence of his book. I am still receiving letters of great angst and criticism of *Ripperologist* from **Mr Wright** three months after the initial review of his book appeared.

In the latest issue of his own *Whitechapel Journal* his editorial continues this controversy, albeit in more restrained terms than in his letters to me, but nevertheless contributing the longest article to that edition of his magazine.

Because I have been so closely involved in this situation, indeed I have been the main butt of **Mr Wright's** diatribe, I feel the need to reply to his editorial in my own comments column. One underlying element that constantly arises is **Mr Wright's** determination that he be known as a 'professional' writer. I looked this word up in my *Chambers's 20th Century Dictionary* (1935 Edition) to be sure I had the meaning correct. I quote its explanation: "n. one who makes his living by an art, game etc, as opp. to an amateur who practises it merely for pastime."

I myself am clearly not a professional as I earn no income from writing but I have yet to discover what journals, papers, magazines or periodicals **Mr Wright** has written for that makes him a 'professional' writer. He edits his own magazine and has recently published his own book privately (150 copies only). If this is his contribution to writing he is no more a professional than myself.

I am a professional in another area and in nearly thirty years in that profession I have learned what *being* professional means, and it does not include getting into high dudgeon after receiving adverse criticism. A professional, however much hard work, time, blood, sweat and tears he has contributed to a project, must ultimately be strong enough to take what criticism that

"...RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED..."

Letters to the Editor

From: David Russell - Kentish Town

Dear Paul -

I would like to thank you and the rest of the Committee for yet another great evening, with Mike Barrett as guest speaker. I hope I did not cause too much of a rumpus by asking the question about the pens and nibs. I may have caused a bit of confusion when Mike Barrett asked me to place the exact spot of the Medici Art Gallery in Bold Street, Liverpool, and I could not answer. Please let me explain.

I have worked for the Medici Society headquarters at Pentonville Road N1, for over 21 years which has two Art Galleries, one in Grafton Street W1, and the other in South Kensington. We also had an Art Gallery in Bold Street Liverpool which I had never visited - the reason I couldn't answer Mike's question. When my firm closed its Liverpool branch, I, along with other members of staff, helped to relocate the stock when it arrived in London.

Mike Barrett has said in front of us all at the C&D meeting that he bought the pens and nibs to forge the diary from the Medici Art Gallery, Bold Street, Liverpool, in 1992. This just cannot be true, as the Gallery was closed on 31st May 1988. I will try to get as much documentary proof as possible to support this and forward it to Shirley Harrison.

Anyone can check with Liverpool City Council when we stopped paying rates and so on. A Club member did phone 192 at the meeting, and of course they were told that there was no such Gallery in Bold Street.

I would like to thank Club members and guests for supporting me, especially Shirley Harrison, Robert Smith, Keith Skinner, Dave Cuthbertson and my old friend Peter Sugarman.

On a personal note, I do not know if the Diary was written by James Maybrick or if it is a forgery, but I do believe it is an old document, and whoever wrote it has long since died. And that, Mike Barrett, is a God-given fact!

Regards -

From: Shirley Harrison - Mitcham

Dear Paul -

I hope that as a result of Keith Skinner's exemplary and diplomatic interview of Michael Barrett at the last Cloak and Dagger Club meeting members may have a better understanding of the problems which have confronted us over the last seven years.

Michael has previously aired his story publicly in Liverpool and this was his opportunity to take the floor in London and explain exactly HOW he forged the Diary.

Everything would have been over long ago if Michael had demonstrated, after his own sworn affidavit in 1994, how he and Anne Graham had created the diary or if he had produced a single piece of material evidence to support his claim. I have myself been promised many, many times that 'proof positive' would be with me in the next post. It never was. It was again promised for the meeting on Saturday, but once again, Michael did not provide it.

It puzzles me that even now some serious historians of the Ripper world - who demand documentary support of every fact from me - are prepared to state categorically that Michael and Anne collaborated in the forgery of the Diary. Where is THEIR proof?

I have permission from Doreen Montgomery of Rupert Crew, our mutual agent, to set the record straight over Michael's claim that 'he has not received a penny' from the book which I wrote in 1993. Michael Barrett's 50% share of the royalties - which in the first year, incidentally, would have more than paid off his mortgage - was sent strictly according to professional requirements, with accompanying publisher's statements. The money was either addressed initially to him personally, (Anne had already left him), to his bank manager, and eventually - at his suggestion - for a time to his solicitor, to whom he gave Power of Attorney. After Michael and Anne's divorce to 50% royalty share was divided by Doreen Montgomery equally between Michael and Anne.

Best Wishes -

Editor's Note: *The Times* of 5th February 1995 stated "...A perusal of Michael Barrett's royalty statements for the book (*The Diary of JTR*) shows that up to last September he had earned **£26,609.41** in royalties."

Further note: Within days of receiving the two letters above we received the following update from Shirley Harrison:

The mystery of the Medici shop has, sadly, been resolved after a very complex slog on the phone.

When the Medici people left Bold Street in 1988 the shop remained empty for about a year. It was then bought by the Rennie family who converted it and the shop next door into a double-fronted art shop. The name of Medici was left on the frontage, as well as the new name 'Liverpool Fine Arts'. Medici was finally painted out two years ago. They do sell pens.

Ironically, round the corner in Slater Street is another shop - Henstock's - which is a very old specialist in pen nibs etc.

I think this story could have a moral which does possibly help. Mike Barrett clearly got the name wrong (whether he ever bought pen there is, of course, quite another matter). But to him it was Medici, although in all the local records Medici did not exist. A touch of the Poste Houses?

June 1999

From: Robert Smith Literary Agency - Caledonian Road

Dear Sir - *The Diary of Jack the Ripper*

23rd April 1999

I have received a letter, dated 11th March 1999, and a synopsis for a proposed book entitled *The Jack the Ripper Diary* by Melvin Harris and Stanley Dangar. Their literary agent, David Cobb of Equinox Agencies, sent them both to the former offices of Smith Gryphon Ltd (the original publishers of *The Diary of Jack the Ripper*) and to Blake Publishing Ltd (the current publishers of the Diary).

Messrs Harris and Dangar explain that they wish to show just how gullible Smith Gryphon were, being taken in by such an obvious hoax - but not so insane, surely, as to publish a book purporting to expose the Diary they published.

Neither the authors nor their agent seem to possess the eye for detail one might expect from such experienced hoax-busters. They clearly fail to notice that Smith Gryphon went into administrative receivership almost two years ago and therefore do not publish anything. More worrying are Mr Dangar's claims to have reports on Albert Johnson's watch from the Universities (sic) of Cologne and Barcelona. As these establishments did not examine the physical watch, I wonder how they managed to be so certain that the tests commissioned by Mr Johnson at two top British Universities, Bristol and UMIST, could not be "substantiated". How reassuring is it, then, to prospective publishers of their book, to read the agent's claim that Mr Dangar "refutes theories put forward by some less disciplined writers"?

If there is a British publisher willing to take on their book, the current publishers of the Diary, Blake Publishing, will no doubt rejoice to see further stimulation to their sales. However, I think we know by now that, six whole years after the Diary was first made public, it is highly unlikely that Mr Harris, Mr Dangar or anyone else is going to prove the Diary a fake. And the longer the situation prevails, the more certain it becomes that the Diary is genuine.

Your sincerely - Robert Smith.

(Copies of this letter were sent to Shirley Harrison, Adam Parfitt [Blake Publishing] and Doreen Montgomery [Rupert Crew Ltd])

From: Stephen Wright - New York

Dear Paul -

23rd April 1999

It would appear that I must answer R Dixon Smith's letter, as some readers might be misled by his ridiculous comments about my book *Jack the Ripper: An American View*, as well as about me, its author.

I realize that Mr Smith is writing as a reader, but I'm afraid I simply do not understand why he should write the letter at all. I do not deny his right to be dissatisfied with my book - all books have errors of one kind or another; mine is no exception - but since this letter-writer happens to be the head of Rupert Books, one would have thought he would not commit his words to public scrutiny.

My book is as well-researched as I could possibly make it. Most unfortunately, Smith has chosen not to explain to the reader that *JTR: An American View* contains a Notes and References section (pages 141-159) completely covering every chapter in the book. I did a prodigious amount of research to compile and write - to put together - this important section of my work. These Notes are an integral part of the book, and every reader will do well to consult them at every opportunity. There is so much additional information here, of great value to many readers. For one reason or another I chose to put the information in a Note or Reference (rather than in the text), but this is absolutely as much a part of the book, a part of each chapter, as is the text of the chapter. After this section, you will find a fairly extensive Bibliography that covers the great majority of books in Ripper literature. For technical manufacturing reasons, I could not make the Index longer, but I believe it to be adequate. My book is actually 166 pages, and not the 140 Mr Smith claims. In addition, there is the usual front matter, another six pages. Anyway, one should judge a book by its quality, not by the number of pages. Besides, I as a writer have always favored the briefer to the longer book. And, by the way, the entire Notes section is single-spaced, as are most of the quotations - there are so many throughout the text. The double-spaced text makes for greater legibility.

Now, for what I consider R Dixon Smith's erroneous impressions or conclusions either about my study or about its author:

Bob Hinton's book came out before mine, but when I was writing mine I was naturally not aware of his own work naming the same suspect, George Hutchinson. So as far as I knew I was naming him for the first time, at least in the context of a book.

Francis Tumblety may have been discussed in some book a century after Lincoln's assassination, but I would not know it due to my lack of interest in the subject (and the same might apply to JFK and the endless books - the same as Lincoln, perhaps even more - written about his own assassination). I'm afraid that when I was growing up Tumblety was not in any of the text books I was assigned in school or college; and not having a keen interest in history I did not read "the Lincoln assassination literature."

Did someone coin the term "Ripperphile" before me? Well, I had never seen it in print, and hence I thought it might be original with me; I'm afraid I was mistaken.

Dixon Smith could not be more wrong in saying that I devoted an entire chapter to serial killer H H Holmes (real name Dr H W Mudgett) "...in an attempt to prove that "Dr" Tumblety was not the first American serial killer..." I devoted the chapter to Holmes for several reasons, including that he was a contemporary of JTR; that he was an American (after all my book is called *An American View*); that in any book about the serial killer, it is best to include this evil genius who was, in so many ways, far cleverer than Jack and whose murder total was not a mere five but at least ten times that number; and Holmes himself was a most interesting study - his life, his murderous activities, indeed almost everything about him.

Smith is correct in saying that "Wright smoothly dismisses both Maybrick and the diary." I can't help adding that even more so I have smoothly dismissed the phony North American "Doctor" Tumblety.

Sincerely -

From: Keith Skinner - Causeway Resources - Teddington

Dear Paul -

27th April 1999

- In my recent *Cloak and Dagger* interview with **Michael Barrett** I wanted to bring out very clearly Mike's insistence that:
- a/. Mike had created the text, whilst his ex-wife, **Anne Graham**, had physically hand-written the journal.
 - b/. A small red Victorian diary had been bought and rejected PRIOR to the purchase of the "black ledger".

On the first point: when I queried Mike as to why the writing in the journal (JTR Diary) appeared to bear no resemblance to Anne's handwriting, he explained that this was because Anne has a multi-personality disorder - resting on Hannah Koren's published analysis of the handwriting as evidential support. Mike, by now, had implicated Anne in the forgery, accused her of emotional blackmail and inferred that she had sustained a seven year campaign of lying, cheating and deceiving for financial gain. This new accusation of a personality disorder, therefore, came as no surprise - though I did wonder when, in their eighteen years of marriage, Mike may have first noticed it.

On the second point: I had already asked Anne Graham about the small red Victorian diary back in **August 1995**. She told me that Mike had been curious to see what a Victorian diary actually looked like and had bought one which had arrived by post. She distinctly recalled the occasion because she had been furious at Mike squandering £25.00 - which she had had to pay. Fortunately Anne had kept her old cheque book and bank statements from which it could later be seen that the cheque had been written on **18th May 1992** and was passed through her account on **22nd May 1992**. This was a month AFTER the journal containing 'The Diary of Jack the Ripper' had been examined by **Doreen Montgomery, Shirley Harrison** and the **British Museum**. It therefore raises the question as to why Mike Barrett should have bought a Victorian diary at a time when publishers were being lined up to bid for the rights to the journal.

Of course, the Victorian diary could have been *acquired* prior to the "black ledger" and *paid* for a few months later. When I telephone Anne on **22nd August 1995** to enquire about the small red diary her first spontaneous response was that she recollected "having to pay around £20.00 for it." She thought that Mike had bought the red diary by phoning Yellow Pages and that this had been "pre-Doreen". My notes indicate that Anne rang me back at 3.30pm the same day to tell me that she had been examining her old cheque stubs and discovered one on which she had simply written "Book - £25". Although undated, Anne believed this referred to the purchase of the red Victorian diary and it fell between cheques written on **17th May 1992** and **21st May 1992**. At my request, Anne then went to the trouble of obtaining a photocopy of the cleared cheque from her bank and sending it to me along with all the other documents. It should now be possible to trace precisely when and where the red Victorian diary was bought and I have suggested to Shirley Harrison that she does this.

Ultimately, it will resolve absolutely nothing at all, except for those who are quite content to accuse Anne Graham of fraud on the strength of Mike Barrett's testimony. If the red Victorian diary is shown to have been acquired before Mike's first contact with Doreen Montgomery on **9th March 1992** - or just after (according to Mike's latest chronology in which he claims to have 'conned' Doreen over the telephone that he had the 'Diary of JTR', though he had not yet, in fact, created it), this, for them, will just prove Anne's complicity in the forgery. Alternatively, if it was bought in **May 1992** it would simply be explained away as foolishness on Mike's part in needlessly spending £25.00 when their joint fraudulent enterprise was almost home and dry. Anne Graham, it seems, is in a no-win situation.

In defence of Anne Graham, I would like to point out that her account of surreptitiously giving the journal (JTR Diary) to Tony Devereux - to give to Mike - has remained consistent for the last five years. She has never tried to change or embellish her original story - and neither have any of her other personalities. Ripper experts (with the notable exception of the Paul Begg) dismiss the Tony Devereux connection as totally improbable and sweep aside her domestic and personal circumstances as irrelevant. To accept Anne maybe telling the truth is to accept that the journal was in her family for over thirty years and that she had no interest in it, nor did she recognise its potential value. This, the Ripper historians will tell you, is impossible. The journal is either a modern hoax, *created after 1987*, or it is genuine. As it cannot have existed circa 1968, they will argue, it follows that Anne Graham is lying about its provenance. Scholarship, it seems, is precious and infallible, and makes no allowances for raw emotional conflict or irrational human behaviour.

Sincerely -

From: John Morrison - Leytonstone

Dear Paul -

For the last nine years I've tried unsuccessfully to trace any evidence concerning a coal mine explosion at the time Mary Kelly was supposed to have become a widow; also a Davies/Davis married to a Mary Kelly. Sadly the archives down there in Wales are of the opinion that no such incident or marriage ever took place, and for a small fee they sent me a copy of every letter ever sent to them over the years (the correspondents' names blanked out, of course) inquiring about the same information, and all came up blank.

Like I've stated many years ago, I firmly believe that Mary loved to spin a good and sympathetic yarn or two. Should any of your members want to give it a try then they should first contact Cultural Services Department, St Peter's Street, Carmarthen, Dyfed, SA31-1LN

Best wishes -

Editor's note: John included a copy of the letter he received in Feb 1990 from the Dyfed County Council which can be seen on enquiry.
