

Essex Boys

A Terrifying Expose Of The British Drugs Scene

Bernard O'Mahoney



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EDINBURGH AND LONDON

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Chapter One

8 JULY 1986. THE PRISON WARDER UNLOCKED THE DOOR, AND I stepped onto the street. 'See you soon, O'Mahoney. Next time bring a friend,' he said. I turned to answer but the main gate of Stafford Prison slammed behind me.

I'd just finished six months of a twelve-month sentence for wounding with intent. It was no big deal. I'd cut a man with a bottle following an argument in a pub in Staffordshire. I was in my mother's home town and arguing with a friend about village gossip, where people were badmouthing me and my friends. Another man kept getting involved, which made it doubly annoying. I kept telling him to go away, but he persisted in interfering. Eventually I was so angry I hit him across the forehead with a bottle.

Prison didn't agree with me at all. It's not so much the Victorian environment, it's the company you are forced to keep. I was sick of petty rules, petty screws and wannabe movie star gangsters.

It was good to be out. It was two years since I had been free in England. I'd gone to South Africa following the bottling incident, as I'd previously been convicted of the same offence and I knew I would go to prison. I was arrested when I tried to make my way back into the country. But that was history now, and I was thinking all the philosophical shit you have to believe in: a fresh start; new beginnings; no more trouble. Futile, but essential to raise your hopes.

My first port of call was the mandatory appointment with one of my probation officers in Basildon, Essex. When I was convicted, she had been appointed to give me supervision and guidance. She certainly had her work cut out. She had spent twenty-three years of a sheltered life in school and

college earning qualifications. But she had skipped the practical side of her subject. The first time we met I explained politely that she couldn't begin to assist me, or understand the world I inhabited. Without much argument, she agreed.

Instead of paying me regular visits in prison, as per regulations, she used to have a day out of the office shopping, and I used to write to her saying what a good and fruitful visit we had enjoyed together. That way she would not have to bother me and she could enjoy an all-expenses-paid day out on the town with her mum.

On the train journey south, I was considering my prospects. I had never been to Basildon before. I had met my girlfriend, Debra, in Johannesburg. She was in South Africa working as a rep for a British hairdressing company and I was out there distancing myself from the constabulary. She lived in Basildon and had helped me secure parole by allowing me to use her address.

There was no romance between us in South Africa. Debra and I were just very good friends. Our first embrace had been in the police cells in Dover where she'd come to meet me as I re-entered the UK. Unfortunately, two detectives had also decided to welcome me home. They took me back to Staffordshire that day and the following morning I was in Crown Court having pleaded guilty to bottling the man in the pub.

Debra had been very loyal to me, visiting me in every dustbin the Home Office had sent me to. We were not Richard and Judy, but we were very happy.

Because of my reluctance to conform, I had been in six prisons in six months. First was Shrewsbury, then Birmingham, which was an allocation place. After that I went to Ranby in Nottinghamshire. It was full of low-intelligence criminals: shoplifters and petty crooks. I was accused of trying to escape from there, which wasn't true. I had only been there six or seven hours when I was put in an isolation

unit. Then I was moved to Lincoln, which was full of northern prison officers who thought they were on this earth to persecute the prisoners. I asked to be moved closer to my home town, and they said they'd never move me under any circumstances.

But I worked out a way round that. They have a box for mail, but a lot of cons put notes in there about other prisoners. Another guy and I devised a plan where we would put notes in this box about me, saying O'Mahoney's got a works (a syringe), so a prison officer would search my cell for heroin every morning. We went even further, saying O'Mahoney's selling bad gear and we're going to kill him. The plan worked. The governor decided he didn't want drugs in his prison, and we were moved to Stafford via Birmingham.

My first sight of Basildon new town was Laindon Station and the Alcatraz Estate, so called because of the warren of alleyways and Legoland-type flats it was made up of. I was to ring Debra from the station, but as she said she only lived five minutes away, I thought I would surprise her. Armed with her address I set off. The only person I surprised was myself.

I spent an hour walking round identical streets, hopelessly lost, before I finally found her home. I was very pleased to see Debra. Unfortunately, the Home Office do not allow for such feelings. I had to report to my probation officer within one hour of reaching the town. I've had several probation officers in my life, so I know the ritual. Sit down, smile. 'How are you? How are you feeling? Do you regret the crime? Do you think you'll be in trouble again? Congratulations, Mr O'Mahoney, you've just won your freedom. See you again next month. Goodbye.'

Coming out of prison is a shock to the system. Employers don't want to know you, and the fact that you've been inside carries some stigma. But eventually Debra and I did settle down to what most would consider to be a normal life.

Debra had her own hairdressing business, and I used to commute to London every day to work as a heavy goods vehicle driver. The hours were very, very long. I'd leave my house at quarter to five in the morning and return at seven in the evening. But it kept our heads above water. I didn't really mix with anyone from Basildon. My friends were in south London, where I'd lived before going on the run to South Africa.

In June 1987 Debra and I had our first child, Vinney. We both wanted children, and Vinney brought us a lot of happiness. We lived a pretty uneventful life, really. Vinney took up most of our time, but he was a labour of love rather than a chore.

Debra and I had never got married, but because of society's rather outdated views on children born out of wedlock, I had adopted her surname.

In 1988 this simple exercise of changing my name brought rather surprising results. I had heard of young children and deceased persons being summoned for jury service due to clerical errors, but an ex-prisoner with at least five different reasons for being disqualified did seem rather bizarre. Nevertheless, the thought of me, a habitual criminal, sitting in judgement on others was intriguing. The desire to see for myself what went on on the other side was the major factor in my deciding to go.

I was asked if I had any convictions, and my denial was accepted without any checks being made. Once inside the jury's waiting room, I sat for the entire morning with approximately fifty other potential jurors, the vast majority of them obviously middle-class. The main topic of conversation revolved around bringing back the birch and the need to reinstate national service. A group of middle-aged ladies at an adjoining table talked as if they were already on the point of passing sentence on the as yet unseen defendant. They agreed on suitable punishments for burglars, rapists (quite unprintable), car thieves and

vandals. They were not quite so ready to discuss the question of innocence or guilt.

It struck me that by extracting jurors from a group of people of 'good character', we were in fact denying the accused person the chance of a fair trial. Judging by the blinkered views of those I was mixing with at Chelmsford Crown Court, anyone charged with a crime must carry a degree of guilt.

The second thing I learned was that judges' directions are ignored. Jurors *do* discuss their cases with other people, and they *are* influenced by other people's views. In this room of fifty or more people the majority were discussing the cases they were on with jurors from other cases. It was during these conversations that I learned just how easily I could influence these people. Because we did not know each other, nobody wanted to say the wrong thing to upset the other person. For the vast majority of them, it was the first time they had been part of such a sinister and exciting world. They kept their mouths shut and their ears open. They wanted to absorb knowledge from the more experienced and not expose their innocence.

I sat on two rather minor cases. One was a fraud case where a man had relieved a company of some money. The second was a family dispute which had escalated into minor warfare.

After hearing all the evidence, the jurors are ushered into a room and locked in. They select a foreman and then they are supposed to discuss the case and come to an agreed verdict. On both occasions, none of us had met before, other than to exchange pleasantries. We all sat round a big table, and there was nervous sniggering and an uneasy silence. No one wanted to begin talking. I took the initiative and suggested that they elect a foreman.

I knew straight away who they were going to elect. It was an elderly gentleman wearing a regimental badge on his blazer. It signalled doom for the accused man who was

sitting in the cells below waiting for us to decide his fate. They started off going down the track of guilt. I learned in the waiting room outside that to be outspoken is to be heard. I attacked the evidence with vigour and before too long I had everyone in the room in agreement.

I've always believed that law and justice are two separate things. Law is man-made, and justice is natural. In the family dispute case a teenager had assaulted an elderly gentleman who lived next door. The gentleman's sons had gathered and gone round to the teenager's house and assaulted the boy and his brothers. They were guilty in law, but it was justice to me. The man in the fraud case had fallen on hard times, and had acquired a bit of money – not a lot – from a very large national company for his family, which to me was fair enough. In the end both cases were found not guilty.

People may say that my actions are the very reason that persons with convictions shouldn't sit on a jury, but I'd argue that most of these cases should not have come to court in the first place, and if there were more people with knowledge of life involved in the judicial system many such trials wouldn't take place. Criminals do not set crime figures, the law does. Fifteen years ago, if a boy stole apples from a farmer's field and he was chased by the farmer with a stick, there would be no action. It's an everyday occurrence of no significance. Today the youth would be charged with theft and probably trespass, while the farmer would be charged with carrying an offensive weapon, using threatening words and behaviour and possibly assault. This is why crime figures are spiralling out of control, not because young people are any worse. I know from personal experience that if you treat an impressionable young juvenile like a criminal, you will create a criminal.

In October 1988 I read a newspaper article about a ten-year-old boy named James Fallon. He'd been the victim of a horrific accident in Johannesburg. James was riding his

bicycle when he was struck by a car driven by a 17-year-old schoolboy who had no licence. The vehicle dragged James 30 metres along the road. There was virtually no hope that he would live. He was unconscious with serious internal injuries and a crushed leg. He also suffered severe spinal injuries and 'died' twice. Top surgeons from all over South Africa managed to save his life with a seven-hour operation which received worldwide publicity. It was the first time such an operation had been carried out in the country, and only the fourth time anywhere in the world. James could not talk, breathe or swallow without the aid of a life-support system, though. His mother had been brought up in the same street as me in the Midlands. I read that James needed a computer similar to those used by jet fighter pilots which would allow him to communicate by eye movement. As his mother was from my home town, I decided I would try to help them raise this money and I figured that the best way to do this would be to stage a charity auction. I set about writing to more than 150 celebrities asking them to send me something which they had signed or was somehow connected to them. Phil Collins, U2, Tina Turner, The Rolling Stones, The Who, Liverpool FC, Manchester United, Arsenal and countless other people and organisations responded. Probably the most surprising response I got was from Ronnie and Reggie Kray. Reggie rang my house and said he had heard about James and my efforts through somebody who worked for Dire Straits and that he and his family were touched by James's plight and wished to help me.

It seemed pointless trying to raise money for a boy from the Midlands in the south of England, particularly as he was in a South African hospital - this was the height of the anti-apartheid period and feelings were running high against South Africa - so I decided to stage the event at a hotel on the outskirts of Birmingham.

I booked the hotel and travelled to Birmingham with my brothers, Michael and Paul, and we began to try and sell

tickets for it. However, my reputation went before me and the locals didn't show much enthusiasm, not because they didn't have feelings for James, but because they considered a criminal assisting another human somehow a bit suspect.

I thought their actions were far worse than any act I had committed. While travelling from pub to pub in our efforts to sell tickets, we encountered a group of young men hanging about in the street acting loutishly. One of these boys, Stuart Darley, shouted an obscenity at me. I stopped, turned round and asked him what he had said. He denied saying anything. I turned and began to walk again with my brothers. He repeated his shout and I turned round again. He had had his chance. I walked up to him and hit him in the face. He started saying: 'Don't hit me, please don't hit me, I haven't done anything.'

His friend ran to a nearby telephone box and tried to call the police. I ran over to stop him. Meanwhile, Stuart Darley began to get brave again. He started shouting further obscenities. I walked over and I hit him again.

Vulnerable people walking the streets may have to endure this behaviour, but I certainly wasn't going to. The following day, Paul and I returned to our homes (Paul lived in south London and Michael remained in Birmingham). At about midday I received a phone call and I was told that the police were looking for us. Throughout my youth I had experienced quite a volatile relationship with the local police, and I wasn't too concerned. I certainly wasn't going to jump into my car and go and hand myself in.

I rang James Fallon's grandmother and explained that I would not be able to attend the event because of personal problems. It had been advertised in the local papers and pubs, it was all organised, so there was no real reason for me to go.

I wasn't surprised to learn later that only twenty people attended. I had half-expected it. The locals had let James

down badly. They had ignored his needs in an attempt to get at me.

Debra was still running her hairdressing business, and I was still commuting to London driving heavy goods vehicles. We moved out of the flat on the Alcatraz estate to a three-bedroomed house nearer to Basildon town centre. In November 1989, our second child was born: Karis, a girl. I had no sisters and I'd never imagined myself having a daughter. Debra and I were overjoyed.

Without me realising it, my efforts on behalf of James began to put a strain on my family life. I'd been trying to assist James for over a year and I had become so immersed in it that I forgot about my own family. It wasn't intentional but with me, it's all or nothing - that's my nature.

I travelled to Broadmoor Hospital in Berkshire on 16 November 1989 for my first meeting with Ronnie Kray. He wanted to discuss with me ways of raising money for James Fallon. I was quite surprised when I first met Ronnie. He was a small man, and good manners personified. He and I got on very well. We sat in a visiting room, which was very much like a hospital day room, and drank can after can of Kaliber alcohol-free lager. Ronnie was genuinely concerned about James Fallon. He told me he considered himself lucky. He had his health, he had his strength. He had his new wife, Kate. He said he could smoke and drink and wasn't complaining about his lot. 'Anybody with feelings would be concerned about what happened to James,' he said. 'It's one of the most terrible cases I've heard of in my life.' After that, I started to visit Ronnie on a regular basis, sometimes twice a day.

Ronnie was on the same ward as the Yorkshire Ripper, and sometimes I would see him in the same visiting room at an adjacent table. Ronnie despised him. He considered it an insult that Peter Sutcliffe had been given a 25-year recommendation after butchering 13 women and attempting to murder a further seven, while he had been

given a 30-year recommendation after shooting a fellow criminal. 'It is as if,' he would say, 'the law considers me a worse man than him.'

After toying with various ideas, Ronnie, his brother Reggie and I decided to stage a charity boxing show for James Fallon in the south of England. The twins said that I shouldn't concern myself with the events in Birmingham as they would ask their friends and the numerous people who supported them to rally round and support it. Again I threw myself wholeheartedly into preparing for a fundraising event for James Fallon.

The police in Birmingham, meanwhile, were still trying to track me and my older brother down. They had arrested my brother Michael and he was on police bail.

In January 1990 I was in Peckham, south London, with my friends Colin and Ray. Colin was on the run from the army over a compassionate leave application. During the winter of 1987, a very good friend of ours, Adrian Boreham, from Battersea, was killed in a road accident while serving with the British Army in West Germany. He was 19 years old. Colin had gone AWOL because they refused him permission to attend his friend's funeral as he was not immediate family. Colin had gone to the funeral anyway.

We were having a drink in the Heaton Arms, Peckham Rye, near where Ray lived. At about 10.30 Ray said he was going home, and asked Colin, who lived in Stratford, east London, how he was getting back. Colin replied, 'I'm going to get the tube to Stratford.'

Unbeknown to us, a group of very large men, probably in their forties, were standing nearby listening to our conversation. Apparently Millwall FC, the local team, and their arch Docklands rivals, West Ham United, had been playing at the Den in New Cross that day and I can only assume that when Colin said he was returning to Stratford, these people thought we were West Ham supporters.

Ray went home first and Colin and I left the pub at closing time.

I was walking in front of Colin when I heard a loud thud. I turned around and saw four or five men, the forty-year-olds, with baseball bats. Colin was lying flat out on the ground. He had been hit in the face with the baseball bat. His jaw and his cheekbone were broken. His teeth hadn't been knocked out: they had been pushed flat underneath and above his tongue.

I ran to help him and they knocked me unconscious. The police were told by a witness that I was laid on my back and my knees were smashed by the bats, and that my assailants were shouting: 'Cripple the bastard, cripple him!'

When I came round I was in King's College Hospital. I had stitches in my head and both my knees were swollen to twice their normal size. I had no money on me. Whether this had been stolen or whether it had been lost *en route* to the hospital, I really didn't know. My first reaction when I woke up was to tell the nurses I was going home. They thought this rather amusing: I could barely sit up or move because of my injuries. But I still got out of bed and managed to reach the street.

All my clothes were covered in blood. It was about eight o'clock in the morning and I scrambled onto a bus full of commuters. I said to the driver, 'I've just come out of hospital. I've got no money on me. I've got to get to a tube,' and I just sat down. He didn't say anything to me.

I managed to get onto the tube network and eventually on a train to Basildon. This was about a quarter to nine. I must have looked like a lunatic sitting there, covered in blood, disorientated because of the injuries to my head. I reached Upminster, two stops from Basildon, thinking I was home and dry, when suddenly a ticket inspector appeared. He demanded a ticket. I said to him: 'Look, mate, I've had a bad fucking day. Leave me alone. I'm not in the mood. Go away.' To my surprise, he did.

Since that assault I've had an operation on my knees and I underwent physiotherapy every week for almost two years. I still suffer from arthritis and other related problems. I went back to the pub on a number of occasions with my friends to seek revenge, but I've never found who was responsible.

During the preparations for the boxing show for James Fallon, I was contacted by a man called James Campbell, who had been appointed by the Kray twins to assist me in promoting the show. He in turn had appointed a partner, a man called David Brazier, whom Campbell worked for in a taxi office in Chigwell, Essex. I didn't particularly see the need for persons to be named as promoters etc, and was not happy with the situation. But I was grateful for the twins' assistance and let matters be.

Reggie Kray sent me a list of phone numbers and addresses of all his friends and anyone he thought could assist me or attend. These were people from the criminal world: Charlie Richardson, Frankie Fraser, Tony Lambrianou, whom I had met on various visits with Ronnie Kray, John Masterson and the Scotsman Jimmy Boyle. Celebrities included Barbara Windsor, Bob Hoskins, Roger Daltrey, Jon Bon Jovi (who had been in contact with Ronnie) and Gary and Martin Kemp who were at that time making the film *The Krays*. Another person on the list was a man named Keith Bonsor. He, the letter said, was the manager of a local nightclub in Basildon called Raquels, and Reggie suggested I go and see if he might attend and also sell tickets in the nightclub.

I went to see Keith Bonsor one Wednesday afternoon, 21 March 1990, two days before the event, which was to be held at the Prince Regent Hotel in Woodford, Essex. Keith said he couldn't go, but would pass on my phone number to people he thought would be interested.

Debra and I were encountering financial problems because of our new house. Like all parents we wanted to give our children everything, so I was looking for further

employment. Reg suggested I ask Bonsor while I was there if he had any door work available, which I could do on Friday evenings and the weekends for additional income. Bonsor told me that they employed a security company and that David Vine, head of that company, was responsible for the hiring and firing of all the doormen. Vine would be in on Friday and Saturday evenings. If I was to turn up at an adjacent bar, Strings – The Piano Bar, any Friday or Saturday evening, I would be able to speak to him personally, and he would be able to help me.

That same Wednesday evening, I had a meeting with James Campbell and David Brazier at a pub in Epping. When we'd finished discussing Friday's event, I rang Debra to tell her I was on my way home. She told me that James Fallon had lost his fight for life that day. I really felt sorry for the boy and his family. He had put up a terrific battle, and so had they.

I went back to Campbell and Brazier and told them that James had died. Their reaction was, well, what should we do with the money? I felt sick. I told them that James's family had incurred huge debts during their ordeal, as there was no national health service in South Africa, and all monies from the event would go to the family.

I know Reg and Ronnie were deeply moved and upset by the news of James's death. It was reported at the time that Reg wept. It certainly wouldn't surprise me, because when he talked to me on the phone, he was really choked up. On the night of the event, a telephone was connected to the public address system and the two hundred diners, who had each paid £40 to attend, fell silent as Reggie Kray paid a moving tribute to James – he'd been granted special permission to telephone the hotel from Lewes Prison.

It was a sight to see so many criminal heavyweights standing sombre, paying tribute to ten-year-old James Fallon. Charlie Kray attended, as did Ronnie's new wife Kate, Joey Pyle, former Page 3 model Flannagan, Chris

Lambrianou and his brother Tony, who had both been convicted with the Krays for the murder of Jack the Hat, and various other people who did not want to publicise their presence as they were normally exiled in Spain, but had risked attending at the express wishes of Reg.

Glenn Murphy and Ray Winstone also attended. It was at this event that I met Geoff Allen, who is said in various books and newspaper articles to be the man they call the Godfather of the Krays. Geoff was 70 but had the mind and heart of a young man. He was jailed at Norwich for seven years in 1976 for masterminding a £300,000 insurance swindle after a historic building named Briggatt Mill was burned down. It was also believed in police circles that Geoff was the man behind the Great Train Robbery. Geoff told me it was to his house in Suffolk that Ronnie and Reggie went to lie low after murdering Jack the Hat.

The event raised a reported £15,000. At the end of the evening when I went to collect this money, however, I could not find Campbell or Brazier. The hotel and other expenses had been paid, but there didn't seem to be any balance forthcoming. Despite my efforts I was unable to contact either of the men that evening.

During the following days, calls from Ronnie and Reggie were fast and furious. They demanded that the money be handed over to the family. I was in total agreement, but I could not find the men. Promise after promise followed meeting after meeting, but the money never did materialise. To this day it remains a mystery as to where it went.

The promoters insisted that it was swallowed up by expenses. I find that hard to believe. I thought it rather ironic when I read one year later, on 22 December 1991, in the *Sunday People*, that David Brazier had taken the dying for a ride when he pocketed the proceeds of a charity football match.

I told the twins at the time that I wanted to seek some sort of retribution, but Reg was adamant that it be forgotten, because the Krays had always been associated with charitable funds, and, understandably, they didn't want to be associated with a rip-off. I rang the Fallon family and told them I would be unable to attend the service being held in this country for James as I still had problems with the local police force who were looking for me for the earlier assault. The truth of the matter was, I was too embarrassed to show my face.

The following weekend Debra and I asked her mother if she would babysit for us. We were going to the cinema in Basildon to see the film *Ghost*. At the end of the film Debra and I had to wait until everyone else had left the cinema because she was in tears over the film. She was still quite tearful when we had walked the 500 yards or so to the entrance of Raquels where I was due to go and see David Vine. It's ironic, looking back now, that my arrival at Raquels was shrouded in sadness. My departure would be in much the same vein.

Chapter Two

THE BAR WAS FAIRLY QUIET WHEN I WENT IN. ON A SMALL STAGE there was a white grand piano, a memorial to the man who tried to bring culture to Basildon. He'd called the place Strings - The Piano Bar.

Although it was done out like a fancy cocktail bar, the clientele were mainly middle-aged heavy drinkers and peroxide blonde Essex girls. The pianist had been replaced by a DJ who had put his record decks on the piano lid and wrapped flashing rope lights around the legs. I asked the barmaid where I could find Dave Vine. After undergoing the 'who wants to know?' formalities, I was finally introduced to him.

Dave was about six foot tall, balding, and very powerfully built. He told me he had a partner, Micky Pierce, and they ran a couple of clubs and most pubs in the Basildon area. He offered me £40 a night and told me I could start on Friday. We shook hands. I wasn't surprised to be offered the job straight away; Reggie's recommendation helped, as did the fact that doormen know doormen, by the way they look and act. I'd done this job before. You speak the same language, you're all on the same level.

Wearing a dinner suit and a bow-tie and being surrounded by drunks is quite an unpleasant experience, so I was pleased to learn on my first night that I would be working at the top bar rather than the front door. But it wasn't long before I discovered that this was where most of the heavy drinkers gathered and where most of the trouble took place.

Vine introduced me to my fellow doormen. There was no unity among them. Most of them there were like me, just working for a bit of extra money. They were not a gang or a

firm. I wasn't impressed. I said hello, and went straight to work.

About two hours into the night a pot-man, the guy who collects the empty glasses, came over to me and said somebody was causing trouble on the dance floor. He pointed to probably the largest man in the club. He was gripping another man by his neck and was threatening him. I went over and said: 'Leave it out, mate, or you'll have to go.'

'It's all right, I know the score, I'm a doorman,' he replied.

I said: 'It's not all right, and if you are a doorman and you do know the score, then you will leave it out. If you wish to sort it out, you'll have to sort it out outside.'

He let go of the man, and started walking down the stairs with me following him. We went down one flight of stairs and he stopped at the cloakroom and began to talk to a woman, maybe his wife or girlfriend. I was insistent: 'I'm sorry, you've got to leave.'

'Who the fuck are you, anyway?' the man shouted. 'No fucking northerner tells me what to do.'

I grabbed him in a headlock and tried to force him down the stairs. He struggled and I began to punch him in the face. We both rolled down the stairs and at the bottom, as I was fighting with him, his girlfriend hit me across the nose with a champagne glass, took off her high-heeled shoe and started to hit me across the head with it. It was laughable, really, but we continued fighting on the stairs.

He was a big man, so it was difficult to fight him and defend myself from the blows from his girlfriend at the same time. I somehow managed to keep going until eventually we were fighting in the foyer where five or six of the other doormen were. I remember thinking: 'Why aren't they helping me?'

I saw that Micky Pierce, Dave Vine's partner, was laughing. I couldn't work it out at all. Eventually the doormen split us up and the man went out of the door of his

own free will. I was livid: 'What the fuck do you think you're doing? Do you work on your own here or what?' Pierce calmly explained to me that the man I'd thrown out was a doorman who worked with us, but it was his night off.

It wasn't the best impression I've made on my first day at a new job, but it was to secure my reputation. It was an impression people retained about me throughout my time at Raquels.

Raquels was a very violent club. I expected to be involved in at least two fights each night I worked. However, it wasn't all gloom. One evening, Keith Bonsor had booked a fire-eater to do a stage show. The fire-eater turned up drunk and was quite unsteady on his feet. During the show he tipped flammable fluid in his mouth and blew out a large cloud of fire over a naked flame. But because he was drunk, when he swigged back the fluid, he'd poured it down his chest and his arm, and set himself alight. He fell off the stage backwards, into the curtains behind the stage, and the curtains caught fire. The doormen were despatched to put him and the curtains out. It was a funny moment.

Things were going okay for me and Debra now I had extra income, so I decided to get the matter with Stuart Darley sorted out rather than wait for the police to catch up with me and arrest me when it may not have been convenient.

My brother and I travelled to the Midlands and gave ourselves up. Over a period we went through the rigmarole of attending numerous Magistrates Courts waiting to be committed to Crown Court. Eventually we were told we had to appear at Stafford Crown Court for trial. No date was fixed, however. When you're sent to a Crown Court, you are not given a date; you are told usually two or three weeks prior to the trial that you're being put on a waiting list. Judges and the police don't know how long a trial's going to last, because a defendant could change his plea or a witness might fail to attend or whatever. It could be over in

a day, for example, so you are told to ring your legal representatives each evening to find out if you're in court the next morning.

One evening I was in Newcastle driving a heavy goods vehicle and I rang my legal representative. I was told I had to attend Stafford Crown Court at ten o' clock the following morning. I said I'd be unable to reach Stafford by then, because of the legal restrictions on the hours you can drive such lorries, but that I would be there not long afterwards. My brother Michael was with me at the time.

We set off as soon as we could and made our way to Stafford. On the way there we rang the court telling them where we were and our expected time of arrival. However, when we did arrive at 11.30 we were told that a warrant had been issued for our arrest and the case was being put off until a later date.

Two weeks later the trial started. We were all charged for not answering our bail. This matter related to the one and a half hours that we were late on the first day. For this heinous offence we were each fined £50. We all pleaded not guilty to the charge of assaulting Stuart Darley. The police suggested that we had tried to intimidate witnesses prior to the trial and intimidate Darley himself. The prosecution were throwing plenty of mud at us, but it was hard for them to make it stick because we all decided to exercise our right not to enter the witness box. However, our trump defence card was Stuart Darley himself. We knew the type he was, and we knew when he entered the witness box, he would do all our work for us.

True to form, Darley was rude, sarcastic and brazen. He insulted our counsel and we could see the straight people on the jury were not impressed. They returned very quickly with a not guilty verdict. The law failed and justice prevailed.

I was still visiting Ronnie Kray on a regular basis. On one occasion Ronnie told me that he was quite upset by a new

house rule brought in at Broadmoor. He said they were now banned from smoking in the day room and were forced to go to a room set aside especially for smoking. Ronnie was a chain smoker, and this caused him a lot of distress. What made me laugh was that he was ranting and raving at me, saying it was a fucking liberty that he had to sit in a smoke-filled room with a load of nutters and he couldn't sit where he wanted to and smoke in peace.

Ronnie asked me to write to Broadmoor and say that I had met prison officers in a nearby pub. I was to say that they were outraged at the unhappiness that this was causing inmates and they were concerned it was going to cause incidents. I wrote the letter from a friend's address and used a false name in the hope that I could help Ronnie.

On my next visit to Broadmoor the manager called me into an office on my way out. I had made a silly mistake. He showed me the letter I had written to Ronnie and he showed me the letter I had written to the hospital. Both were in my handwriting. From that time onwards, because I would not reveal the names of the prison officers who allegedly told me about this matter, I was banned from visiting Ronnie. I thought it was quite amusing that I had been banned from Broadmoor Hospital.

Once I had settled in at Raquels it became quite clear to me that things were not running the way they should be. It was as if a handful of local hardmen were running the club, and not the doormen. Local men with reputations would fight in the club and the following evening they would be allowed in - because, as the other doormen said, 'It's not worth the trouble.'

The doormen thought that if they barred one of these local hardmen who kept causing trouble, they might meet him in the street, or the man might call round to their house and they would end up the victims of an assault. I was of the opinion that if someone wanted trouble, they could