# The curious case of Bernard Bale: uncovering a controversial celebrity journalist



In the spring of 2023, subscribers of the British local lifestyle magazine Somerset Life were expecting an April edition dedicated to gardening, including expert tips for enthusiasts and recommendations for the best spots to view bluebells in the south-west of England. Instead, they found a striking front cover story: an exclusive interview claiming that Hollywood star Johnny Depp had fallen in love with Somerset and had purchased a secret estate spanning 850 acres near Kingston St Mary, including a property referred to as Somerset Mansion.

The report, authored by freelance journalist Bernard Bale, quickly attracted intense attention from national and international media outlets. Celebrity-focused publications such as Hello! magazine praised Depp’s “idyllic 12-bedroom property” boasting a walled garden and even its own dairy farm. The US magazine People highlighted Depp’s “quiet life in England,” while The Independent noted the star’s “newfound introverted lifestyle.”

However, soon after publication, publicists representing Depp disputed the story, stating that the actor had not bought any property in the area. Those close to Depp also expressed confusion, with one source describing the situation as "strange." Notably, the journalist behind the piece, Bernard Bale, was not recognised by Depp’s team.

Bernard Bale is a relatively obscure English freelance writer whose byline has appeared alongside interviews with an impressive roster of prominent figures across various regional publications. His portfolio includes conversations with personalities such as Barack and Michelle Obama, Jennifer Aniston, Céline Dion, Barbra Streisand, and actor Nicolas Cage, often published in local newspapers and magazines including the Scottish Sunday Post and Derbyshire Life. Bale’s work also extended to political figures, with articles purportedly featuring former Chancellor Rishi Sunak in Dogs Today magazine during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, sources close to Sunak have stated they have no recollection of such an interview taking place.

Further scrutiny into Bale’s work revealed additional high-profile interviews, including an exclusive with Tom Cruise for Derbyshire Life and a discussion with Sir Ben Kingsley featured in Yorkshire Dalesman. Yet, representatives for these stars denied any record of interviews with Bale. Meanwhile, a spokesperson for Yorkshire Dalesman affirmed that all freelance submissions, including those by Bale, undergo rigorous editorial checks and are published in good faith.

Bale himself has declined to disclose how he secures these interviews, citing a longstanding professional reputation based on “trust, integrity and credibility,” its years of cultivated relationships resulting in “hundreds of interviews and even friendships.” Observers in the entertainment journalism field noted that interactions between journalists, public relations agents, and managers can lead to stories that might be presented differently depending on editorial decisions or social media amplification.

In some instances, Bale’s stories have yielded exclusive information later reported by major media. The editor of Dogs Today, where Bale purportedly conducted two interviews with Barack Obama, affirmed that there had never been complaints about his work. This suggests at least some legitimacy to the sources Bale accesses.

Tracing Bale’s background reveals a multifaceted career beyond journalism. According to his LinkedIn profile, he began writing professionally at age 13 and has since worked across various media formats, including television, radio, voice acting, and PR consultancy. An archived report from the Daily Mirror in 1978 shows a Bernard Bale involved in a personal incident regarding Cleethorpes Zoo, indicating a colorful history preceding his journalistic pursuits.

One standout story involved Bale’s 2022 exclusive interview with George Clooney in Derbyshire Life, where Clooney was quoted expressing a fondness for Derby County football club and a desire to purchase it. This story quickly spread to national newspapers such as The Sun, which ran a headline about Clooney’s supposed interest in buying the club, eliciting delight from fans and local politicians. Yet, attempts to contact Clooney’s press office went unanswered, and the extent of Bale’s relationship with the actor remains unclear.

Following concerns about the accuracy of some interviews, particularly after challenges emerged regarding Bale’s work for other titles, Derbyshire Life’s editor Nathan Fearn confirmed that the magazine ceased using Bale’s freelance submissions in July 2023 after becoming aware of these issues.

Similarly, Somerset Life discontinued its association with Bale following the Johnny Depp controversy. Despite editors initially believing Bale had genuine access to celebrities, discussions with Depp’s representatives led them to terminate their relationship with him. A spokesperson for Somerset Life declined to provide further comments.

The Guardian has noted that although there is no definitive proof that Bale’s interviews were fabricated, several stars and their representatives claim no memory of engaging with him. Bale maintains that he has retained documentation, including original articles and related correspondence, supporting his credibility. He has also disputed any implication that he has misled readers.

Now approaching 80, Bernard Bale continues his involvement in journalism and broadcasting, maintaining an active presence in producing celebrity stories, with reports suggesting potential future interviews with renowned figures such as Lionel Messi.

This complex narrative provides a glimpse into the multifaceted and sometimes opaque world of celebrity journalism, illustrating how high-profile stories can emerge from unexpected sources and generate widespread attention and debate.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.hellomagazine.com/homes/494686/johnny-depp-home-somerset-away-from-spotlight-inside/> - This URL supports the claim about Johnny Depp's 12-bedroom property in Somerset, featuring a walled garden and a dairy farm.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/johnny-depp-somerset-england-mansion-b2307946.html> - This article corroborates the story about Johnny Depp's quiet life in Somerset, England, and his ownership of an 850-acre estate with a 19th-century mansion.
* <https://www.marca.com/en/lifestyle/celebrities/2023/03/24/641dd89622601d62478b4599.html> - This source provides information about Johnny Depp's purchase of the Somerset estate in 2014 for £13 million.
* <https://www.realestate.com.au/news/johnny-depp-eyes-63m-italy-estate-but-worried-officials-vow-to-protect-the-castle/> - This article mentions Johnny Depp's current residence in Somerset, England, while discussing his interest in an Italian estate.
* <https://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/rtf-architectural-reviews/a6851-an-inside-look-at-all-the-houses-owned-by-johnny-depp/> - This source details Johnny Depp's Somerset Mansion, situated on an 820-acre estate, which he acquired in 2014.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the source of the original article discussing Bernard Bale's interviews and the controversy surrounding Johnny Depp's reported Somerset estate.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/media/ng-interactive/2025/apr/27/strange-case-writer-landing-a-lister-interviews-local-magazines> - Please view link - unable to able to access data