



- CLOSE UP -

MIKE MALONEY

*For more than 30 years Mike Maloney photographed the rich and famous. He tells **Keith Wilson** about chatting up the Queen, outsmarting Frank Sinatra, and taking tea with Lady Diana...*

Born and raised in Lincoln, Mike Maloney says his love of photography began when he received a Kodak 127 camera from his parents for his 10th birthday. In his teens he went to work as a tea boy for *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, but it wasn't long before his enthusiasm for photography gained him more attention than his tea-making...

So how did the tea boy become a photographer?

The Head of Advertising at *The Chronicle* said, "I see ►



 **SNAP! (ABOVE LEFT)**
Mike was tipped off that the Queen would be on the beach, but got a surprise when she started photographing him!

 **OFF GUARD (MAIN IMAGE)**
Mike was known for his ability to capture his subjects off-guard, and at their most human



something very good in you. I think you'd be very good in advertising." So I went home and told mum and dad. Dad said, "No, no, none of that nonsense. You want an apprenticeship," because that was the logic in the 1960s. So I went into the print side as a compositor, a linotype operator, which was very fortuitous, because I was still taking pictures at the same time. I was then able to go to an editor and say, "Look at these photographs, what do you think of them?" I learnt very quickly, to the extent that in the end they were commissioning me to take major pictures, instead of their own staff photographers.

What was your first proper photography job for *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*?

It was a commission in 1967 to take pictures of the Boy Scouts' parade at Lincoln Cathedral, and I was paid ten shillings and sixpence for it! It was used as a big picture, four columns by eight inches.

Was that your mind made up then, that you were going to be a photographer?

Absolutely, yes, because I loved it. I loved the whole business about it.

How long did you remain at *The Chronicle*?

Well, the editor, who loved my work and was commissioning me, got into trouble with the unions, because I wasn't NUJ (National Union of Journalists). I was NGA (National Graphical Association). To cut a long story short, I left *The Chronicle* and joined a magazine that was run by the editor of *The Chronicle* after he left. It was called *Lincolnshire Pride*. It was a glossy monthly. So I joined them, but it all went pear-shaped because the guy who put the money in pulled the money out again. I then asked the Managing Director of *The Chronicle* if I could get a job on the staff as a photographer. He said: "We don't think you're up to it, son." So I left Lincoln in 1971, went to London and joined *The Evening News*.

PANDAS (ABOVE)
Mike got exclusive access to the inner areas of Chengdu Breeding Centre in China

CRUNCHIE STUNT (TOP RIGHT)
Mike lashed himself to the wing-walking harness of a third biplane to capture Yves Rossy's act of daring

GOOD DOG! (RIGHT)
The Irish Guards' mascot, Malachy, inspects a soldier

ALL ABOARD (FAR RIGHT)
Six railway conductors having fun in front of the camera

What was your introduction to royalty?

That's a good question. I worked on *The Evening News* as a junior photographer, freelance. In those days I used to wear bow ties. On this particular morning there was a staff photographer called Ken Towner in the office. The paper's editor came in, a wonderful guy called Don Bodie. He said to the picture editor, "We've got the rota for the Queen today at the Palace where she is presenting awards to the brave policeman who prevented Princess Anne from being shot." It was the man who jumped out onto The Mall in front of Princess Anne when she was in a car and started shooting. James Beeton was the officer. The editor said: "Who are you sending?" The picture editor said, "Well, I was going to send Ken Towner." The editor looked at Ken Towner, who was in jeans and an open-necked shirt, and said: "You're not sending him. Who's that guy, smartly dressed with the bow tie? Send him!"



So a bow tie got you to the Palace. What happened after that?

I went down into the Queen's lounge where the presentation was taking place. James Beeton was there with his wife and children, and his little girl puts her hand up and says, "Excuse me Your Majesty." Now, you're not supposed to ask the Queen questions, and she rocked. I was shooting with a Rolleiflex and got one frame where I have captured the Queen rocking, with just the light from the window. A cracking shot. I took it back, and from the reaction, you'd have thought I'd won the Pools. The editor came out: "What a brilliant picture, what a shame we

PROFILE MIKE MALONEY

Mike's outstanding career has left him with enough awards to stock several trophy cabinets

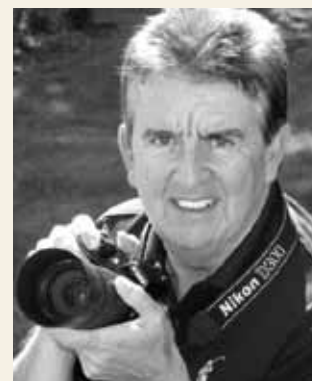
■ Mike Maloney is Britain's most decorated press photographer. He's the winner of more than 100 major press photography prizes, including British Press Photographer of the Year, which he's won three times.

■ After joining *The Evening News* in 1971, he rose to become Chief Photographer of Mirror Group

Newspapers, turning freelance in 2002.

■ He is a Freeman of the City of London, and in 2012 was made professor of photography at the University of Lincoln.

■ In 2005 Mike Maloney was made an OBE by the Queen at Buckingham Palace.



SAVOY SHUFFLE

Moving from Lincoln to London was something of a culture shock for the young Mike Maloney. His first job at The Evening News was a birthday party at the Savoy. But it wasn't just any old birthday party...

■ "The highlight of my social calendar in Lincoln was to go to the Guildhall and cover the mayor's Christmas party for the civic dignitaries. You got a glass of sherry and a mince pie. I went from that to my first job at *The Evening News*, where the picture editor said to me, "Maloney! We've got a job for you at 10 o'clock tonight."

I said, "What, 10pm?"

"Yes, why?"

"Well, I'm normally in bed by then."

"Well, you won't be tonight. You're going to the Savoy. It's Noël Coward's birthday party." I went down, met the great man, shook his hand and said: "Mr Coward, I'm from *The Evening News*, I'm Mike Maloney. It's such a great privilege to meet you."

"My dear boy, the pleasure is all mine. Come with me, I'll introduce you to people." Every big name was there. I ended the night dancing with Rachel Roberts, who was married to Rex Harrison!"

can't have it just to ourselves!" *The Evening News* was part of *The Daily Mail* and they ran it as a spread. It won my first international award, which was third place in the World Press Photo in Amsterdam. That was my very first royal photograph.

Since then, many more awards have come your way. What were the main changes you noticed coming from a local paper to a Fleet Street paper?

It was a totally different world. I loved life in Lincoln, and I was taking pictures I really enjoyed. I never wanted to leave, but when I was told I couldn't join *The Chronicle*, there weren't any openings. I had no alternative other than to move to London, which was a big step for a provincial boy. But as soon as I got into the showbiz, I loved it. It was all champagne and caviar in those days.



What was the kit you were using back then?

When I started at *The Evening News*, the guys were still using plate cameras. This was 1971, and at this time the plate cameras were going out and the Rolleiflexes and Mamiyas were coming in. If you were really top notch, you had a Nikon F, but in those days there was a vast difference between a 2¼-inch negative and a 35mm one.

I was known for my quality, so for a presentation at Buckingham Palace or Number 10 I would always bring a Rollei and a flash. Photojournalism would require the Nikon F, so you would preordain the way you were

J PAUL GETTY
in 1960, the
American oil billionaire
hosted a party at his
Surrey home – 1200
guests were invited,
but an estimated 3000
people turned up

going to operate according to the given job.

How long was it before everyone was using 35mm?

I would say two years. It was an amazing transformation. The old boys were still with 5x4, a lot had Rolleis, and they used to say to me when I was off to London, "Listen, son, you can operate your first year at Fleet Street with a Rolleiflex, it will cover everything." I used to do sport with it. You didn't have motor drives in the early 1970s, they came in about 1974, but by 1975 everyone was shooting 35mm.

What other Nikon cameras did you work with?

Well, I did the whole spectrum of Nikon. The evolution of Nikon was amazing, because I went from the Nikon F to the Nikkormat, which was a great camera. The Nikon F

“As soon as I got into the showbiz, I loved it. It was all champagne and caviar in those days” Mike Maloney *Press photographer*



Clockwise, from top left

ELTON JOHN
The Daily Mirror
wanted photographs of
the top of Elton's head
after his hair transplant

TOMMY COOPER
The comedian and
Mike became friends, and
Mike took this photo at
Tommy's home in 1977

TORVILL AND DEAN
Mike took this shot
in 1979, five years before
the pair won gold at the
1984 Winter Olympics

ANDRE CHIKATILLO
The Russian
government invited Mike
to photograph the
notorious mass murderer
prior to his execution

was always the workhorse camera, though. You could drop it, bounce it. I remember being in Belfast with mine, diving to the ground to avoid a sniper's bullet – smashed the head, made a big indentation in the pentaprism. I looked through it and it'd gone all crazy paving, but it still took great pictures.

During your film days what was your favourite Nikon?

The Nikon F, without a doubt. The Nikon F fitted into my hand like a glove. I still have my Fs. I've got three. It was a futuristic camera that produced great results. There was just something about the F and the 50mm f/1.4 Nikkor and the 35mm f/2 that was special.

What would you choose as your desert island lens?

I'd choose the 300mm f/2.8. It would be followed closely by a

“ There was just something about the Nikon F and the 50mm f/1.4 Nikkor and the 35mm f/2 that was special ”

Mike Maloney Press photographer

50mm f/1.4, but the 300mm f/2.8 was groundbreaking. On royal assignments, it was a take-anywhere lens. It was a massive piece of glass. It was so sharp. I think it came out in the 1980s, but the fact you could use 300mm at f/2.8 meant the bokeh was sensational.

Why did the 300mm help you so much for royal assignments?

Well, invariably for royal assignments you're not close to a member of the royal family, you're standing back. This was long before 600mm lenses. If I wanted to do an expression shot in the early days, a 100mm wouldn't cut the mustard,

but a 300mm would, so you could still get the expression, and because the optics were so great it was pin sharp. I used to like working at f/4.

Let's fast forward: when did you first work digitally?

I had the very first digital camera at *The Daily Mirror*. Nikon were in bed with Kodak at that time and it was one megapixel and it cost a fortune, something like £23,000! It was like the early mobile phones, with one big heavy massive battery with the phone on top. But look at the cameras now, which I love. I collect them all, I must have about a hundred cameras.

RULE BRITANNIA

Mike has not only photographed the Queen on numerous occasions, he has also met her formally on many world tours. But the greatest moment of all was in 2005 for the investiture of his OBE...

What's your favourite memory of photographing the Queen?

■ I think the Derby at Epsom, when she was jumping in the air because her horse was out on its own [right]. It will never happen again.

Have you ever been able to mention that to her?

■ No, never. When the Queen presented me with an OBE at the Palace, you only get 30 seconds with a member of the Royal Family. She said: "It's unusual being on this side of the camera, isn't it?" I said: "It is Ma'am." She started talking about Britannia, and I had some of my happiest moments with her on Britannia, in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, although I never stayed on it. She started reminiscing, and the next thing I know I'm into two and a half minutes with the Queen instead of 30 seconds. She said: "You know, I do miss it, so much." I said, "Ma'am, not as much as I miss it."

Which is your favourite Nikon camera now?

My favourite camera is the new Nikon Coolpix 900. I tested it for Nikon and said, "I've got the perfect operation for it, I'm going to India for six weeks and I'll be photographing the Bengal tigers in Ranthambhore, and I'll be at the Taj Mahal." Do you remember the 2000mm lens?

Yes, it's a very heavy mirror lens...

When it came out there were three in the UK: Nikon had one, the Ministry of Defence had one, and I had one – on loan, of course. It cost more than £20,000. I took the lens to the South of France to photograph Princess Diana. I had it on the beach at St Tropez on a great big tripod and you could see Diana in the distance on a boat – you couldn't see her with the naked eye. It was perfect for that



situation, but it wasn't manoeuvrable – you couldn't just sling it over your shoulder. Fast forward now to the Coolpix P900 and it's got a 24-2000mm lens built-in, and it's retailing at £500 or £600! The quality is so good.

Can you recall a favourite moment from a royal assignment?

I propose Diana. She was a kindergarten teacher then. The way newspapers operate is that we get tipped-off by the staff at the Palace. The paper in those days paid the staff retainers that were more than their salary. That's how I got the famous pictures of the Queen on the beach at Holkham in Norfolk with the corgies [see page 102], and all the tourists walking past taking no notice of her.

Was that the occasion when she was walking on the beach with the Queen Mother?

Correct. Nobody took any notice; I found that staggering. Now, with Diana – we called her Lady Di – the editor was tipped-off one day. I'd come back from photographing her at kindergarten and the editor called me over: "I need a panoramic shot of Coleherne Court". This was where Diana lived with her flat mates. It was in The Boltons in London, and she was in the first floor flat in the corner room. The editor wanted a



THE QUEEN'S EXCITEMENT

This photo of the Queen at Epsom won numerous awards, and marked the beginning of a special connection between Mike and the Palace

panoramic shot of the whole of this Georgian building. He said: "We've been tipped-off that Diana Spencer is going to be the next queen of England, so I'm running it on page one tomorrow, and a spread."

So, I shoot back down to Coleherne Court. It's now 2.30 or three o'clock in the afternoon. I set up a tripod and did a panoramic, 180 degrees. While I'm taking the pictures a voice behind me said: "Oh, you still here?"

It was her?

"Oh, hello Lady Di." I said: "Sorry I'm here, but I tell you what we're doing: we're going to run the story tomorrow about you being the next queen of England." She went scarlet and smiled. She said: "What are you going to say?"

I said: "Well, this is what..." and she said, "No, don't say anything. Would you like a cup of tea?"

I said, "I'd love one because I've missed my lunch doing this, but I don't know any cafés around here."

She said, "No, come up to the apartment, but I have to ask you,

“Do you remember the 2000mm lens? Nikon had one, the Ministry of Defence had one, and I had one – on loan, of course”

Mike Maloney Press photographer



no pictures and no quotes. I'll make you some tea and you can talk me through it." So we had tea and Nice biscuits.

I told her what we would be doing. She was fascinated. She obviously knew what was going to happen, although the engagement hadn't been announced.

What job were you given on the wedding day?

On the day of the wedding in 1981 I was given the wonderful task of being at Clarence House, where she was getting ready for the wedding. Patrick Lichfield was the official photographer. I was the royal rota photographer, but I saw her first

PRINCESS DIANA
Mike was the first press photographer to see Lady Diana in her wedding dress – she'd become Princess of Wales later that day

in the wedding dress. The editor said to me, "Now, I know you know Diana Spencer, Mike. I'm expecting some good quotes from tomorrow morning." You know what? She never looked at me once the whole morning. Head down all the time. Not a word. Now, she opened up at the Palace. Patrick told me she opened up once the wedding was out of the way.

Which celebrities have you most enjoyed working with?

Oh gosh, how many hours have you got?! I suppose I would have to say Frank Sinatra.

You photographed him quite a few times, didn't you?

Quite a few times. We didn't have the best of starts together. He had me thrown out of Claridges when he married Barbara Marx and his parting shot to me was, "Get this bum out of here!" But I pulled off the biggest coup of my career at the Royal Albert Hall. The background was that Frank Sinatra had retired, but he decided to make a comeback and he was returning with the Rat Pack, but Frank had fired Dean Martin for being drunk on stage. Dean was never drunk on stage. It was an act. He'd get drunk, but never on stage. So he got rid of Dean Martin and brought on Liza Minnelli. After the ignominious exit from Claridges I said to the editor, "Frank Sinatra is back in town, he's appearing at the Royal Albert Hall, I'd like to get my own back on him."

What year are we talking?

I think it was 1992. Around town posters went up: 'The Rat Pack are back in town. Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Junior, Liza Minnelli'. There was a big banner with a red line: 'Strictly no photography'!

There's a challenge!

I said to the editor, I'm going to get pictures. He said, "Well, I don't hold out much hope, but good luck!" I acquired a box at the Royal Albert Hall and I worked out that from the box to the stage to get a full length shot is 600mm. So I took a 300mm f/2.8 and a 2x converter. I put a monopod down my trouser leg into ▶

“ I put a monopod down my trouser leg, I broke down the camera body and I put the film in my underpants ”

Mike Maloney Press photographer

my sock, I put the 300mm on my arm with my overcoat over it to hide it, I broke down the camera body, and I put the film in my underpants! So I'm hopping like Long John Silver at the Royal Albert Hall.

When I got into the box, I closed the curtains, got undressed, put all the gear together and waited for the orchestra to strike up. When the lights dimmed I pushed the 300mm with the 2x converter through the curtains and started shooting. They were brilliant. What happened was that Frank got pissed on stage. He had a bottle of whisky on the grand piano, and I had these amazing pictures where he's filled up the tumbler, downed it in one, then straight into 'Strangers in the Night'.

Maybe that's why he didn't want photographers there?

Precisely. They couldn't catch me, though, because I was in my box with my gear and the music was drowning out the shutter. Frank took a tumbler of the whisky and addressed the audience: he looked at the tumbler of whisky and said, "You killed my old man but you ain't getting me!" Then down in one, and straight into 'New York, New York'. But his legs were starting to go, and my last shot is of Liza Minelli, with her arms underneath his armpits holding him up. I took about 400 pictures, shooting colour, pushed to 1600 ASA, nothing faster than 1/30 sec. I took the films back to the paper and the editor went ballistic: "These are wonderful!" They ran them on page one and a spread.

I bet that provoked a reaction?

It sure did. The next day the office gets a phone call: "I'd like to talk to Mike Maloney."

"Call for you Mike."

I take the call...

"Is that Mr Mike Maloney?"

"Yes."





“We’re associates of Mr Sinatra. We’d like to come and see you.” I put the phone down. I had to alert security because they were after me. They would have given me a kicking!

You had a meteoric rise in press photography. What was the secret behind your success?

A lot of it was luck, but in press photography I never hunted with the pack. Say you had a photo call with the Prime Minister on location, all the pack would be there, but I’d be away from them.

So you’d be looking for a different angle entirely?

Entirely. Now if there’s a definitive picture, PA or Reuters will have it, so my paper will get it, they won’t miss out. So if I have something special, I’ll have it on my own.

And therefore a greater chance of getting more exclusives?

Correct. When George Best appeared at Marylebone Road Magistrates Court on some misdemeanour, nobody in a million years thought he was going to go down for it. But the judge sent him to prison, so instead of walking out, George was taken down to the Black Maria. A Black Maria is the prison van with cubicles and small high windows, and I knew where George was going to come out. Now this is really lucky. When

FRANK AND LIZA (LEFT)

A little thing like cameras being banned wasn’t going to stop Mike from photographing Sinatra getting drunk on stage

ROBERT MAXWELL (ABOVE)

This is the last photo taken of controversial press baron Maxwell, who disappeared in the same location two weeks later

TONY BLAIR (RIGHT)

When he was Prime Minister, Tony Blair had Mike’s photo of him hanging on the wall of 10 Downing Street



the van came out, the driver’s door was open, and behind the driver’s door was a grille, and George Best just happened to be sat in my eye-line through the grille, over the driver’s shoulder, with the door open. Had the door not been open I wouldn’t have got it. I fired one frame with a flash as the van came out and I didn’t know I had it until I processed the film. There was George illuminated through the grille. A cracking shot, but very lucky.

If Mike Maloney were starting out all over again today, do you think there would be anything that he’d do differently?

I think that’s a difficult question, for the simple reason that the foreign travel now has gone, the opportunities have gone, even going

to the homes of Hollywood stars. You would have to work for one of the big agencies now: Getty, PA or Reuters. That would be your goal now. In my day the ultimate goal for a press photographer was to work for the *Daily Mirror* in Britain. I had the three golden decades of the 70s, 80s and 90s. When I joined the *Daily Mirror* in the early 70s, we were selling five-and-a-half million copies a day. Now, it’s down to 700,000.

It’s the way the Internet has completely changed media and the way people use media.

You’re 100 per cent correct. Today, everybody is a photographer. □

“In press photography I never hunted with the pack. So if I have something special, I’ll have it on my own”

Mike Maloney *Press photographer*

• To see more of Mike’s work, visit www.mikemaloney.co.uk