



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

R

-v-

Glen Gibbons

Manchester Crown Court
Sentencing Remarks of Mr Justice Bryan
7th February 2018

1. Glen Gibbons, on the day of the pre-trial review hearing 12 days before your trial, you have pleaded guilty to the murder of Linda Parker on 25 September 2017. I must now sentence you for that murder.
2. You had previously been in a relationship with Ms Parker for around two years, and since February 2017 you had lived at her house 75 Atholl Drive, Heyward. Your relationship ended on 17 September 2017, at which time you moved out of her house.
3. It is clear from the evidence before the Court that your relationship had been volatile, and that you often argued with each other especially when you had both been drinking. You were extremely possessive and controlling of her. You constantly wanted to know where she was, where she was going and who she was with. Members of her family noticed changes in her behaviour after you became her partner.
4. On a number of occasions you were violent to her. There is evidence from Linda's daughter, Vanessa Hetherington, that about 8 months before the events of 25 September 2017 Linda had called her saying that you had dragged her around the room, punched her and pulled her hair, and she received a similar call three weeks later saying that you had "dragged her around the room" and punched her. There is evidence of Linda having suffered bruises during your relationship, that she had explained away to her daughter as being due to her having low iron, and she had shared photos of her bruising with her son, Jason Hetherington, on WhatsApp. Due to your violence the relationship had broken down on two occasions.

5. On 9th July 2017 you were seen by a member of the public, Caroline Lloyd, behaving in a violent manner towards Linda. Caroline Lloyd felt it appropriate to contact the police to report this behaviour and two police officers, PC Booth and PC Richardson, attending in response to the reports. Linda would not provide a formal statement and no further action was taken.
6. On 16th September 2017 it appears you had an argument with Linda whilst you were both out with family in the King's Arms public house, Heywood. This culminated in you grabbing Linda Parker by the throat. Linda did not make a complaint about this incident and no further action was taken, but it led to the end of the relationship between you.
7. You alleged in your prepared statement at the time of your interview by the police that Linda was also argumentative and violent towards you when she was intoxicated and that she belittled you by talking about previous boyfriends. I accept that your relationship was a volatile one, and that on occasions she herself may have been provoked into verbal and physical confrontations with you, but that is no excuse for the domestic violence that I am satisfied that you inflicted upon her in the past, and which was to lead to her ending the relationship. I am also satisfied that she was scared of you. In this regard there would have been evidence at the trial that Vanessa Hetherington, whilst on the phone to her mother Linda, had overheard Linda telling you that she was scared of you and what you would do, and that in that conversation she was upset and started crying.
8. It is clear that you were not willing to let Linda go. The evidence in your trial would have been that a week before the day of the murder you had rung her son Connor Hetherington and told him that you were going up to 75 Atholl Drive to watch Linda, and that he had told you that that was stalking, and that you had replied that you knew but were going to do it.
9. On Saturday 23 September, Linda's landlord changed the locks on the front door to the house. Linda ignored calls from you over the weekend. You were clearly seeking to get in touch, and equally clearly she did not want to speak to you.
10. On Monday 25th September you waited for Linda at Rochdale bus station knowing that she had to go on a course at the Jobcentre at 10am. You approached her as she got off the bus from Heywood at 9.39am. It is apparent that Linda was upset and frightened and that your conduct was distressing her – indeed an unknown female member of the public intervened to tell you to leave her alone, and staff at the Jobcentre called her a taxi as she was so upset and appeared to be 'very frightened'.

11. Linda took a taxi to her mother's house where she discussed what had happened with her mother and sisters. It was decided that she would try to obtain a restraining order against you. At about 11.20am she left alone to go back to 75 Atholl Drive to get her daughter's dog, which she was looking after, intending to return with it to her mother's house.
12. You meanwhile, had bought a set of kitchen utensils at 09.15 in Rochdale that included a large knife. You also bought a chisel. In due course you made your way to 75 Atholl Drive, and entered the house through an unsecured kitchen window. You waited there until Linda Parker returned.
13. I am satisfied so that I am sure that you did indeed take that large knife, that you had just bought as part of the utensil set, to Linda's house and the scene of her murder, intending to commit an offence with that knife, and also having it with you available as a weapon, and that you then used that knife to commit the murder. In this regard I have regard to your recent purchases, that you then travelled to the property, that the evidence supports the conclusion that you had that set of kitchen utensils including the knife and the chisel with you, that you broke in, that you then murdered Linda with a knife, and that after the murder, the set of kitchen utensils were recovered in the garden near the kitchen window, your point of entry, but without the large knife that it originally contained when purchased by you that morning. Your fingerprints were on the back of the packaging for the set. The knife and chisel have never been found. I infer from the facts of which I am sure, as I have identified, that you then took the knife and chisel away with you, and subsequently disposed of them.
14. Turning to the circumstances of the murder itself. At about 12.40pm two police officers PCs Anderson and Stock attended 75 Atholl Drive, Heywood as the result of an emergency call from Kathleen Parker, a sister of Linda, your victim. Whilst they were there, Kathleen Parker arrived at the address and relayed to the officers a phone conversation she had just had with her sister Linda in which Linda had told her that you had broken into the house. She heard Linda talking to you, saying "Get out Glen, get out. I'll talk to you if you put the knife down". Her evidence was that Linda's voice had been trembling. She was clearly frightened by your actions – you had a knife in your hand, and were to use that knife.
15. The police forced entry and went upstairs where they found Linda's fully-clothed body lying on her bed on her right side, covered in blood. You had stabbed her no less than twelve times to the head, neck and left side of her chest. Paramedics attended but sadly life was pronounced extinct at 1.11pm.
16. From the evidence of the forensic pathologist Dr Naomi Carter, it is apparent that at least three of those wounds was capable of being the fatal wound. The

wounds had caused injuries to the left carotid structures of the neck, both lungs, the aorta and pulmonary arteries, the heart and the main blood vessel returning blood to the right side of the heart. Four of the stab wounds caused damage to bone and cartilage. Bone injury would have required severe force.

17. I am satisfied from the number and nature of the wounds that Linda suffered that even if you only originally intended to scare her with the knife when you first arrived at the house (which would itself be an offence) by the time you came to use the knife your intention was not merely to inflict serious bodily harm, it was an intention to kill. It would be apparent to anyone that multiple stab wounds to a person's neck chest and neck inflicted with severe force were likely to be fatal, bar only the fortuity of where the stab wounds impacted.
18. Sadly it is clear from incised wounds on Linda's hands indicative of defensive injuries that Linda was all too aware of what you were doing and sought unsuccessfully to fend you off. It must have been a terrifying act, and one you continued despite her attempts to defend herself. After murdering your victim, you left by the front door, locking the mortice lock and posting the keys through the letter box.
19. At 12.36pm you called your sister Sonya Gibbons in a call lasting 2 minutes and 29 seconds. In that call you told her that you had stabbed Linda in the neck and thought you had killed her. You also called your mother Ann Booth, with whom you were living at the time, and told her that you had knifed Linda, and thought you had killed her. You told her that you were going to hand yourself in as you did at 2.10pm that afternoon at Rochdale Police Station. Her evidence gives some insight into why you did what you did, not that it is any excuse for what you did. She had noted that you were brooding over the preceding weekend because Linda was blocking your phone calls. According to her you kept saying it was difficult because you loved Linda and couldn't be without her and couldn't let her go. When charged with Linda's murder you replied, "I'm devastated it all happened."
20. On your version of events you say that you had let yourself in through an insecure kitchen window – so on your own account you entered the property as a trespasser, knowing that she did not want to be in contact with you, and the evidence I have identified indicates that you came with the knife, something that is now accepted on your behalf. I have read what you said in your prepared statement, and bear that in mind. However the fact is that you were unlawfully in Linda's home, you went there armed with a knife, you threatened her with a knife, and you then murdered her with that knife. Nothing that could have been said or done by Linda on that fateful day in such circumstances can excuse you for repeatedly stabbing her in the chest and neck, resulting in her death.

21. The facts of this case illustrate the tragedy of the loss of a life, set against a sadly all too familiar backdrop of a history of domestic violence, where one partner finally manages to end the relationship, only for their ex-partner to be unwilling, or unable, to accept that the relationship is at an end leading to a confrontation and fatal injuries to the victim, for that is what Linda is, a victim of your criminal conduct.
22. Linda was 52 at the date of her death, slightly older than you, a mother to four children and a grandmother. You, and you alone, are to blame for her death. I have been provided with a victim impact statement on behalf of the family parts of which have been read out in court today. It makes painful reading. It is clear that the family members' lives have changed forever – they understandably remain in shock and disbelief, having lost not only a mother but also their best friend. They feel guilt that they were not there to save their mother – but they have no reason to feel guilty – the guilt is yours, and it is a guilt which you must carry for the rest of your life.
23. There is only one sentence that the law allows to be passed for the offence of murder, that is a mandatory sentence of imprisonment for life.
24. I am required to specify the minimum term, pursuant to Section 269 and Schedule 21 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003, which must elapse before you can be released on licence.
25. Pursuant to paragraph 7 of Schedule 21, Parliament has set the starting point for the minimum term for anyone who takes a weapon to the scene of a murder intending to commit any offence, or have it available as a weapon and used that knife or weapon in committing the murder, and that starting point is 25 years. For the reasons I have given I am sure that you did indeed take that large knife, that you had just bought as part of the utensil set, to Linda's house and the scene of her murder, intending to commit an offence with that knife, and also having it with you available as a weapon, and that you then used that knife to commit the murder. I accordingly adopt a statutory starting point of 25 years as I am required to do.
26. Having chosen that starting point I am required then to take into account aggravating and mitigating factors in your case.
27. There are the following aggravating features in your case:-
 - (1) As is accepted on your behalf, there was a significant degree of planning in that first, you went out and bought a set of kitchen utensils including a large knife and took that set including the knife to the victim's house and secondly you waited in that house for your victim to arrive, armed with

that knife, which you then brandished, causing her fear and distress before you inflicted the fatal wounds.

(2) As is also accepted on your behalf, you were an unlawful intruder into the victim's home, a place where she was entitled to feel safe.

(3) You are not of previous good character, having a number of previous convictions including for violence albeit that they are of some antiquity, and as such I do not regard them as an aggravating feature.

28. I turn then to the mitigating features that exist in your case.

29. I have had the benefit of reading the psychological report of Susan Hope-Borland which I have given careful consideration to in the context of culpability (though it is not suggested that you were suffering from an underlying mental disorder). I have had careful regard to the mitigation that has been offered on your behalf. I have also read a number of independent eye witness accounts of previous events and I bear those well in mind as providing a fuller picture of your relationship. I accept that you have shown remorse for your offending which I am satisfied is genuine remorse.

30. Reference is made in the psychologist's report to the fact that you considered yourself still to be in love with Linda, and that you felt rejected and abandoned by her and unable to deal with the ending of your relationship. You were also jealous of her for reasons that I bear in mind, and I accept that her behaviour towards you may have had more effect on you than on many others due to your own psychological traits, and low IQ, as referred to in the psychologist's report. I make clear that I bear well in mind what I have been told in relation to such matters by your counsel. Such matters may offer some explanation for your conduct but they do not excuse your conduct. I do however bear them in mind as mitigating factors though there are limits to the extent of such mitigation. To the extent that you were in love with Linda it was an unhealthy and controlling love, and one that did not prevent you being violent to her during your relationship, and which ultimately led to her untimely death as a result of your actions.

31. In setting the minimum term I have had regard to both the aggravating and mitigating features in your case. The aggravating features in your case lead me to increase from the starting point of 25 to 28 years, but after taking your mitigation into account I reduce the period to 26 years before credit for plea.

32. In relation to your guilty pleas I have had regard to the Reduction in Sentence for a Guilty Plea Definitive Guideline and the associated guideline in relation to mandatory life sentences for murder on page 8 thereof. You have always accepted that you carried out the attack, but a psychiatrist's report was sought

and obtained on 7 November 2017 from which it was apparent that there was no issue of fitness to plead or any question of diminished responsibility. It was open to you to enter a plea thereafter although I accept a psychologist's report was sought and only received on 15 January 2018 after which you had a consultation with leading counsel on 31 January 2018, and indicated that you would be pleading guilty, albeit such plea was entered shortly before your trial fixed for later in February. After careful consideration, and on the particular circumstances of your case, I feel able to give you the credit which I will identify in a moment, which is close to full credit, and is consciously given at the actual figure identified below.

33. Stand up Mr Gibbons

34. I sentence you to imprisonment for life. If you had been found guilty at trial the minimum term I would have set would be one of 26 years taking account of the aggravating and mitigating features in your case. However I give you appropriate credit for your guilty plea, namely 4 years, and set your minimum term at 22 years. From this must be deducted 133 days that you have spent on remand in custody for this offence. The minimum term is accordingly 21 years and 232 days. The victim surcharge must be paid.

35. It is important to emphasise, so that you and the public can understand the position, that the minimum term is just that - a minimum period which cannot be reduced in any way. After it is served, there is no guarantee that you will be released at that time, or at any particular time thereafter. It is then only if the Parole Board decides you are fit to be released that you will be released. Moreover if, and when, you are released you will remain subject to licence for the rest of your life, and may therefore be recalled to continue your life sentence. It is in these ways that a life sentence protects the public for the future.