



JUDICIARY OF  
ENGLAND AND WALES

**R v Trevor Gibbon**

**Central Criminal Court**

**Sentencing Remarks of HHJ Pontius**

**30<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

On 17<sup>th</sup>. December last year this defendant appeared at Hendon Magistrates' Court for sentence upon a charge of Harassment to which he had pleaded guilty early that month. The sentence included the imposition of a Restraining Order forbidding him from further anti-social behaviour against his neighbours, the MORRISON family. It was his earlier, repeated such behaviour that had led to the charge and his appearance at court. It is plain from the evidence the jury heard that the defendant felt extremely angry and resentful that he alone had been charged. It is equally plain that during the rest of that day and overnight, into the following day, he brooded upon what he saw, quite wrongly, as an injustice in the way he had been treated.

The next day - 18<sup>th</sup>. December 2014 - the defendant made up his mind to avenge himself, for that perceived injustice, upon the person he regarded as primarily responsible for it, ALISON MORRISON. She left home to walk to work shortly after 7.30am, by which time the defendant had taken two knives from the kitchen, placed them in a carrier bag and driven to a nearby road from which he would be able to observe Mrs. MORRISON as she made her way to Northolt Park station, along the route that the defendant had seen her previously take.

After she had walked past his car he got out, taking the bag containing the knives, and followed her. Having removed the knives from the bag he attacked Mrs. MORRISON from behind, using the larger knife to stab her more than 33 times in an extended attack of truly horrifying savagery. The first fifteen of those wounds were delivered to the back before she fell to the ground and the number and severity of the seven defensive wounds to her hands demonstrate how desperately ALISON MORRISON fought for her life.

The defendant then sat astride her, repeatedly stabbing her to the chest in what the witness ADETOKUNBO JOLAOSO described as an attack which “didn’t look frantic, just consistent, not too quick”. This, therefore, was not a frenzied loss of control on the defendant’s part but a merciless and deliberate act of vengeance, undoubtedly with an intent to kill ALISON MORRISON in the forefront of his mind. The jury has unanimously rejected the defendant’s assertion that at the time he was suffering from an abnormality of mental functioning born of a depressive illness. As the prosecution put it, this was murder, pure and simple.

However, I am prepared to accept - as did Dr. JOSEPH, the psychiatrist called by the prosecution - that a combination of factors may, over a period of months, have led to a measure of stress upon the defendant and those factors obviously would have included the on-going dispute with the MORRISON family which culminated in his court appearance on 17<sup>th</sup>. December. That stress, in turn, may have resulted in some mild depression - a possibility, again, that Dr. JOSEPH accepted - and it may well have been depression that led to the defendant’s suicide attempt in November.

That depression, however, by the jury’s verdict, did not result in an abnormality of mental functioning during the crucial hour or so on the morning of 18<sup>th</sup>. December and thus cannot be regarded as a contributory factor explaining the defendant’s acts. Rather, those acts in my view are properly to be seen as the product of resentment and festering anger arising from the dispute generally and the defendant’s sentencing the day before in particular.

His deliberate planning, early that morning, of what he would do and how he would do it - fetching two knives from the kitchen and driving to a place from which he would see the approach of ALISON MORRISON - entirely rules out any suggestion that this might have been a spontaneous act arising from a momentary loss of temper and it is that degree of planning and the deliberate execution of that plan which most seriously aggravate the facts of this dreadful murder.

I make it plain, however, that the taking of the knives from the kitchen to the place where the attack took place, with a clear intention of using them specifically to carry out that attack, does not additionally aggravate the crime because that factor of itself requires me to take as the starting point for the minimum term of the sentence of Life Imprisonment, which I now impose, the increased figure of 25 years created by paragraph 5A of Schedule 21 to the Criminal Justice Act of 2003.

This brutal murder robbed a close-knit family of a devoted and caring wife, mother, sister and aunt, a woman - the victim impact statements make movingly clear - with a zest for life and enthusiasm for her responsible and stimulating job. As a result the family is left devastated and - additionally tragic in itself - the damaging effects upon the relationship between her husband and son may well take a very long time to repair.

I have already set out some of the aggravating features of this murder and they are clear enough: the extent of the planning and the deliberate ferocity of this merciless attack, from behind, upon a totally defenceless woman, delivering a significant number of the knife blows with severe force, and doing so in a residential street at a time of day when many people would be likely to be nearby, on their own way to work or getting ready to leave home. To that list must be added the fact that the crime was committed less than twenty four hours after the imposition of the Court Order specifically forbidding the defendant from contacting the MORRISON family in any way.

The mitigating factors are these: first, the defendant's previous good character, with no instances of violence - serious or otherwise - in his forty eight years, which must nevertheless be set within the context of his acceptance of guilt the day before, reflecting a history of harassment of his neighbours over many months. Inevitably, that to some extent dilutes the effect of that piece of mitigation.

Secondly, I accept that the defendant now fully recognises, with genuine horror, the enormity of his crime. He has always admitted that it was he who delivered the fatal wounds which ended ALISON MORRISON's life and in accepting that responsibility has expressed remorse. I do not doubt that neither he, nor his family, will ever be able fully to accept that he was capable of such a dreadful act of violence but he will live with the consequences throughout the remainder of his life.

I also must have regard to the fact that the defendant's obviously mercurial temperament had been affected, to some degree, by mounting stress arising out of the long-running difficulties with the MORRISON family, although - for the reasons I have already expressed - the mitigating value of what I am prepared to accept may have been mild depression at the time of the murder is limited, not least because those difficulties were, to a very large extent, of the defendant's own creation. I also bear in mind that some additional stress caused by serious illness within his family and the pressures of a demanding job is likely to have weighed upon his mind, resulting in his low mood.

TREVOR GIBBON, in all the circumstances which I have just explained I have no doubt that the minimum term which you must serve of the Life Sentence I have imposed upon you is twenty eight years.

That, I make plain, does not necessarily mean that you will be released upon completion of that minimum term. I am simply setting the period you must serve in prison before becoming eligible to apply for release on licence. When precisely you will be released will depend entirely on the Parole Board's assessment on all the material then available. That decision will therefore be a matter for the Board alone,

not for this Court, but after your release you will remain subject to the terms of your licence for the rest of your life.

The time you have spent in custody since your arrest - 191 days - will be deducted from that minimum term.

If this is an appropriate case for the imposition of a Victim Surcharge, that will apply in the relevant amount.

-ENDS-