



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

R -v- Lavinia Woodward
In the Crown Court at Oxford
25th September 2017

Sentencing remarks of HHJ Ian Pringle QC

On 6 April this year you appeared before me and pleaded guilty to one offence of unlawful wounding. Your case was adjourned until 12 May for the preparation of a pre-sentence report which would also take into account the psychiatric report from Dr Hopley.

On 12 May, having listened to the opening by the prosecution and having heard the submissions of your learned Queens Counsel, I decided to defer your sentence until the last weekend in September. I did so for two reasons: firstly, to allow you to continue with your counselling; secondly, for you to demonstrate over a lengthier period of time that you had truly rid yourself of your alcohol and class A drug addiction. I have now had the opportunity of reading an updated report from Dr Hopley, a report from Dr Collins, a report from Dr Pozzo and have reminded myself of the contents of all the character references. I am quite satisfied that now is the time to sentence you.

The facts of this matter can be stated relatively shortly. Having met a few months before, in October 2016 you began a relationship with a student from Cambridge University. Sadly, you were still suffering from the effects of a very damaging previous relationship with another who had introduced you to class a drugs. You clearly had both drug and alcohol addictions. On 30 December 2016, your partner paid you a visit in your accommodation in Christchurch College in Oxford. It rapidly became clear to him that you had been drinking. He tried to discourage you from continuing your drinking without success. As the evening progressed, you became increasingly volatile. At one stage your partner contacted your mother over Skype in order to seek her assistance over what to do about you. When you discovered this, you became extremely angry, starting to throw objects around. It is clear from the transcript of the 999 call that your partner summoned

the help of the police before you picked up a bread knife which was in the room and struck a blow with it to his lower leg. In the course of the incident two of his fingers also received cuts. Your partner managed to partly restrain you, albeit you then started to turn the knife on yourself and he had to further disarm you to prevent further self-harm. When the emergency services arrived it was abundantly clear that you were intoxicated, deeply distraught and mentally disturbed. You were taken to a police station in a very distressed state.

Fortunately, the wounds that your partner received were relatively minor. The two 1 cm cuts to the fingers were treated at the scene with steri-strips and the cut to the leg was closed with three stitches.

The sentencing Council guidelines in relation to section 20 offences require me to assess both the harm and the culpability involved in this offence. I say straightaway that in my view this was a case of lesser harm. Whilst this was clearly a case where your behaviour must have been extremely intimidating to your partner, the actual injuries were relatively minor and certainly less serious in the context of this offence. However, I am also satisfied that this was a case where the offence was of higher culpability. Although it was simply an item which was in your room at the time for perfectly legitimate purposes, you used a bread knife in this attack as a weapon and that raises this offence to one of higher culpability. Accordingly, this case falls into category two of the guidelines which have a starting point of one year and six months custody and a category range of one year to 3 years custody.

Next, I need to decide whether there are any aggravating features which raise the seriousness of this matter and whether there are any mitigating features which reduce the seriousness. There are certainly no statutory aggravating features. However, there is one non-statutory aggravating feature, namely that at the time of the offence you were heavily under the influence of alcohol. Whilst that in part was as a result of a previous and highly damaging relationship, you were old enough and intelligent enough to realise that over-indulgence would severely affect your behaviour.

When I turn to look, however, for mitigating features the picture is very different. There are many mitigating features in your case. Principally, at the age of 24 you have no previous convictions of any nature whatsoever. Secondly, I find that you were genuinely remorseful following this event and, indeed, although it was against your bail conditions you contacted your partner to fully confess your guilt and your deep sorrow for what happened. Thirdly, whilst you are clearly a highly intelligent individual, you had an immaturity about you which was not commensurate for someone of your age. Fourthly, as the reports from the experts make clear, you suffer from an emotionally unstable personality disorder, a severe eating disorder and alcohol drug dependence. Finally, and most significantly, you have demonstrated over the last nine months that you are determined to rid yourself of your alcohol/drug addiction and have undergone extensive treatment including counselling to address the many issues that you

face. In particular, you have demonstrated to me since I adjourned this matter in May a strong and unwavering determination so to do despite the enormous pressure under which you were put and which has been referred to by your learned counsel.

-END OF REMARKS-

Following the judge's remarks he sentenced the Defendant to 10 months imprisonment, suspended for 18 months.