



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

**Sentencing remarks of
The Honourable Mr Justice Sweeney Kt**

The Queen

v

Benjamin Luke Field

Oxford Crown Court

18 October 2019

Ben Field you are now aged 28 and have no previous convictions or cautions.

Using the numbering in the original Indictment, I am sentencing you for 7 offences, variously committed in the near 4 year period between April 2013 and February 2017, when you were aged 22 to 26, as follows:

- Count 2: The murder of Peter Farquhar, who was then aged 69, on 25 October 2015.
- Count 4: Fraud, in the period from April 2013 to October 2015, in relation to the will of Peter Farquhar and his house at 3 Manor Park Maids Moreton, as a result of which you gained over £160,000.
- Count 8: Fraud, in the period from June 2015 to February 2017, in relation to the will of Anne Moore-Martin, then aged 81-83, and her house at 6 Manor Park Maids Moreton, as a result of which you hoped to gain around £300,000.
- Count 9: Fraud, in May / June 2016, on Anne Moore-Martin in relation to the supposed purchase of a car, as a result of which you gained £4,400.
- Count 10: Fraud, in the period from June to September 2016, on Anne Moore-Martin in relation to the supposed purchase of a dialysis machine for your younger brother, as a result of which you gained £26,700.
- Count 11: Burglary, in July 2016, of the house at 5 Manor Park Maids Moreton which was unoccupied because of the relatively recent deaths of its owners Mr and Mrs Meakin, during which you stole a bottle of Drambuie.

Count 12: Burglary, in August 2016, of the house of Jonathan Elliman, then aged 83, at 41 Treefields Buckingham, during which you stole 3 antique rifles and a bayonet valued together at £450 and also of great sentimental value – which were recovered by the Police in March 2017 at one of the addresses where you were storing property.

You notified an intention to plead guilty to Counts 4 and 8-12 in advance of the PTPH and duly pleaded guilty to them at that hearing in March 2019, as a result of which you will receive credit for plea of 25%, which I believe to be just and fair, on each of those Counts. At the conclusion of your trial, and on overwhelming evidence, you were found guilty by the jury, unanimously, on Count 2.

In sentencing you I take into account not only the relevant evidence given at your trial, but also the Victim Personal Statements of Ian, Susan & Andrew Farquhar (the younger brother, sister-in-law and nephew of Peter Farquhar); of Ann-Marie Blake (the niece of Anne Moore-Martin); and of Jonathan Elliman (Count 12) – all of which speak graphically about the dreadful impact of your crimes. I also take into account the letter written to me by your father, mother and brother in which they seek to underline what they see as the best in you; and the Psychiatric Reports of the Consultant Psychiatrists Dr Alcock (first instructed on your behalf during the trial) and Dr Joseph (instructed by the Court after the trial).

In your evidence at trial you admitted that from late 2012 until mid-2017 you had lived by deception and deceit and had been a well-practiced and able liar – whether to Peter Farquhar and Anne Moore-Martin in pretending that you were in a genuine and caring relationship with them when you were not, or to others. You further admitted how you could manipulate and manoeuvre people, however sceptical they may have been, to achieve your ends without ever asking them to do so directly. You were, you accepted, a snake talker, as you were able to build pressure on your victims to believe what you needed them to believe and then to do whatever you needed them to do.

I have no doubt, based on the evidence at trial and the Reports of the Consultant Psychiatrists, that throughout the 4 years of your offending you had, and still have, a Personality Disorder which, whether classified as Dissocial (Psychopathic) Personality Disorder (Dr Alcock) or Narcissistic Personality Disorder (Dr Joseph), included a lack of empathy, a callous lack of concern for the feelings of others, and an incapacity to experience guilt or to profit from experience. Indeed, as to Narcissistic Personality Disorder, the evidence at trial clearly demonstrated grandiosity, a sense of superiority towards others, the exploitation of others to achieve personal gain, the need to belittle and humiliate others, fixation on fantasies of power and success, intelligence, a need for admiration from others, and a sense of entitlement together with an unwillingness to empathise with the feelings, needs and wishes of others. Equally, in my view, there is considerable force in Dr Joseph's opinion that you have very little understanding of your own inner world, leading to your need to deceive and destroy others. You also kept notes and journals about what you were planning and what you had done, and you did so for the pleasure that that gave you.

However, none of that provided you with a defence, and nor does it diminish your culpability. As Dr Alcock concluded in his Report made during the trial: *“I am not of the opinion that the symptoms of his condition would have substantially impaired his cognitive functioning..... In my opinion Mr Field knew exactly what he was doing, in a carefully planned and orchestrated way and was in full control of his own decision making when carrying out his described conduct.”*

Your first victim was Peter Farquhar - a nationally renowned former Head of English at Stowe School who had owned a house at 3 Manor Park Maids Moreton for many years, living there with his mother until her death in 2002. He retired from Stowe in 2004 – after which he lectured at the University of Buckingham and wrote and published 4 novels. He was in good health, still mentally sharp, and kept detailed journals in which he chronicled his life and thoughts. He was a committed Christian, but also gay and attracted to younger men – which was a conflict that he had resolved throughout his adult life by remaining celibate. Thus, although close to his family and with a wide circle of friends he was, at his core, lonely and craving for love and affection. You realised that when, as a student, you came across him at the University in 2011 and 2012 and you decided to exploit him for your own gain.

Although heterosexual by inclination, indeed you had numerous girlfriends whilst you were involved with both Peter Farquhar and Anne Moore-Martin, you set about seducing him. By October 2013 you had falsely persuaded him that you loved and cared for him and that you had finished with girlfriends, and he had fallen in love with you. The offences that you committed against him were not in any way his fault. You moved in with him in November 2013, by which time you had decided to get him to change his will and to leave his house to you and then to kill him. You soon began to gaslight him and, on his 68th birthday in January 2014, proposed to him, which he accepted and in consequence of which, having also pretended to him that you had discovered your faith, you went through a betrothal ceremony with him in church in 2014.

In November 2014, as you were aware because you used to read his correspondence and journals to keep ahead of him, Peter Farquhar changed his will so that you would get £15,000 and also inherit 3 Manor Park - but only if you had resided in the house for 24 months prior to his death. Thus, having only been living there for a year at that stage, you could not inherit until November 2015 at the earliest. But in preparation for that, and from at least January 2015 to the end of September 2015 you set about covertly drugging Peter Farquhar on over 50 occasions, as well as continuing to gaslight him. As shown on the Schedule used at trial the effects on him were appalling and, to him, incomprehensible. You clearly enjoyed the cruelty of it, as illustrated firstly by the fact that you chose to drug him with the psychoactive drug BK2CB on the occasion of the launch of one of his books at Stowe School, resulting in his complete humiliation; and secondly by the film that you made of him when he was in bed in a confused state (which mirrored the equally cruel video that you made of one of the patients at the nursing home where you were working). Your purpose in drugging him, and in what you said to those who endeavored to treat him when, in consequence of the drugs, he was ill, was to lay the ground so that your murder of him in due course would appear to have been him having drunk himself to death whilst alone.

At all events in mid-September 2015 he changed his will again, so as then to leave you £20,000 and a life- long right to live in the house, with no requirement as to the length of your residence prior to his death (Count 4). Thus, you were now free to kill him whenever you chose to do so.

In the meanwhile, thanks to going into a nursing home in early October for 5 days, where you were unable to drug him, Peter Farquhar had recovered considerably and was feeling optimistic about the future.

You murdered him in the evening of Sunday 25 October by going to 3 Manor Park where he was alone, covertly giving him the drug Dalmane and getting him to drink a sufficient quantity of very strong whisky. I have no doubt that, if it was necessary, you then finished him off by suffocating him in a way that left no trace (Count 2).

His body was found the next day and, at that stage, your plan worked. It was thought that, whilst alone, he had drunk himself to death. In the result, you inherited the £20,000 in July 2016 and ultimately agreed with the Farquhar family that 3 Manor Park should be sold, and that you should be given half of the net proceeds. It was thereafter sold for £290,000 of which, in December 2016, you were paid £142,000.

Your second victim was Anne Moore-Martin who was aged 81 when you met her in mid-June 2015, some 4 months before you murdered Peter Farquhar. A model in her younger days, and by the time you met her a retired Head Teacher, she had owned 6 Manor Park for many years – initially looking after her mother there and, since 2003, when her mother had died, living there alone. She had survived cancer and was a regular Catholic churchgoer with a strong faith. She suffered from two brain conditions, but her intellectual powers were still good for her age. She treated her niece Anne-Marie Blake as her daughter and in 2011 had left no.6 and the remainder of her assets to Anne-Marie Blake in her will. Anne Moore-Martin was loving, kind and affectionate, but by the time that you met her quite lonely which, you recognised, made her vulnerable. So, with no affection for her at all, you set about seducing her too, with the ultimate object of defeating her affection for her niece and getting her to change her will so that you would inherit 6 Manor Park (which by then was worth around £300,000) on her death. Before you murdered Peter Farquhar, you were delivering cards to her, giving her gifts, researching sex with the elderly on the internet, and suggesting that she watch a film that portrayed a relationship between an older woman and a younger man. Ultimately, in November 2015, a month after the murder, you began a sexual relationship with her. You engineered break ups and reconciliations, and ultimately began staying the night from mid-April 2016 onwards - writing love letters that extolled your enjoyment of sharing her home and getting her to watch another film featuring a relationship between an older woman and a younger man.

However, as I have already touched on, throughout all your dealings with her you were carrying on relationships with other women. Equally, nothing of your crimes against her was her fault.

Although you already had a car, in May 2016 you persuaded her that you needed money to buy one, and she gave you £4,400 to do so. To complete the deception, you hired a car for the day and pretended to her that you had used the money to buy it (Count 9).

In July 2016 you gave her a large photograph of yourself with the words “I am always with you” on the frame, and (although you had no religious belief yourself) began to take her to Mass.

That same month you burgled 5 Manor Park (Count 11), the home of the late Mr & Mrs Meakin, just for the pleasure of doing so – gaining entry by using a key that they had entrusted to Anne Moore-Martin and which you had taken without her knowledge.

In August 2016 you took photographs of Anne Moore-Martin, without her knowledge, whilst she was performing a sex act on you – intending to use them against her in the future if you needed to. You also carried out the burglary at the home of Mr Elliman, then 83, who you knew from your social contacts with him did not always keep his front door locked – again committing the offence for the pleasure of doing so (Count 12).

In August & early September 2016 you carried out the dialysis fraud on Anne Moore-Martin during which, taking cruel advantage of her kindness and generosity, you deceived her into believing that your brother urgently needed a dialysis machine, and that your family was only able to make a partial contribution to the cost. You then supervised her as she liquidated some of her assets and thereafter paid you a total of £26,700 (Count 10).

In mid-September 2016, taking advantage of her strong faith, you began writing messages on mirrors around her house and got her to believe that they were messages from God and that you were receiving them too. The messages, some subtle, some direct were designed to get her to change her will and to leave 6 Manor Park to you, not Anne-Marie Blake. You also faked a letter from a solicitor as to your own testamentary intentions in relation to Anne-Marie Blake. And it all worked. On 20 October Anne Moore-Martin instructed a solicitor in order to change her will. However, the solicitor who she instructed was Diana Davis, who was the same solicitor who had dealt with Peter Farquhar's will and so knew that you had benefitted under it. She smelt a rat. In consequence when Anne Moore-Martin visited her in November 2016 she managed to put her off changing the will at that stage. Diana Davis then sought advice as to how she could bring her otherwise legally privileged knowledge to Anne Moore-Martin's attention. In the result she got your permission, which you had no real alternative but to give, to inform Anne Moore-Martin about Peter Farquhar's will and your inheritance. In consequence, you gave more love notes to Anne Moore-Martin and renewed the mirror messages, as a result of which, on 22 December 2016, Anne Moore-Martin duly changed her will – feeling, as she was later to say, impelled to do so although not really wanting to (Count 8).

In early February 2017 Anne Moore-Martin became ill and was admitted to hospital. The following day, whilst she was still in hospital, you went to 6 Manor Park and removed any items that you thought might be incriminating. When you returned a little later Anne-Marie Blake and her husband were there and she too smelt a rat.

The Police were informed, the extent of your deception in relation to Anne Moore-Martin was revealed, and she changed her will back to how it had been. An investigation into the death of Peter Farquhar was also begun.

It is clear from statements made by Anne Moore-Martin and Anne-Marie Blake that, unsurprisingly, Anne Moore-Martin was deeply affected by the realisation of what you had done to her. She died, of natural causes, in May 2017.

The investigation ultimately led to your arrest and prosecution.

Like Doctors Alcock and Joseph, I have no doubt that you are a dangerous offender.

In that regard, the public will be protected from you by the sentence of life imprisonment that I must, and do now, impose upon you on Count 2.

In addition, on that Count, I must also identify the minimum term that you must serve before you can even apply for parole. The minimum term will reflect not only the seriousness of the murder but also of the other offences associated with it (which in this case means all the other offences for which you fall to be sentenced today) and must also respect the principle of totality.

The murder itself was clearly for gain, and thus attracts a starting point of 30 years' imprisonment. There were statutory aggravating features, namely a significant degree of planning and premeditation, mental and physical suffering inflicted on the victim before death, and the abuse of a position of trust, and there were other aggravating features – principally Peter Farquhar's vulnerability, the fact that the offence took place in his home, and that the detection of the murder was substantially delayed by the manner in which it was carried out.

Your lack of previous convictions and your age at the time provide scant mitigation, and therefore the balance of aggravating and mitigating features results in an increase of the minimum term to 32 years.

Count 4 was a serious fraud but, in relation to the minimum term, it has already been taken into account in the finding that this was a murder for gain. Nevertheless, I must impose a sentence in relation to it. It involved a gain of £160,000 together with abuse of trust, a significant degree of planning and targeting of a vulnerable victims and thus high culpability. Therefore, it was a Category 2A offence, which attracts a starting point of 5 years' imprisonment. However, as is conceded on your behalf, by virtue of the additional aggravating features of serious detrimental effect on Mr Farquhar including mental harm, and his particular vulnerability, and notwithstanding your lack of previous convictions and age, the offence ultimately falls into Category 1. Taking all matters into account, I conclude that it would have attracted a sentence after trial of 8 years' imprisonment, from which I deduct 25% to reflect your plea, resulting in a sentence of 6 years' imprisonment, which will be concurrent to the sentence on Count 2.

The same factors apply to the categorisation of the offences in Counts 8-10 with, ultimately, Count 8 being a Category 1A offence, Count 9 a Category 4A offence, and Count 10 a Category 2A offence. Taking totality into account I propose to pass a sentence on Count 8 which reflects all three Counts. In the result I conclude that the sentence after trial on that Count would have been one of 10 years' imprisonment, from which I deduct 25% to reflect your plea, making a total of 7.5 years imprisonment which will be consecutive to the sentence on Count 4, but concurrent to the sentence on Count 2.

By the same process, and rounding down, I impose a sentence of 12 months' imprisonment concurrent on Count 9, and of 4 years' imprisonment concurrent on Count 10.

In my judgment and again rounding down for totality, that adds 3.5 years to the minimum term, which thus provisionally increases to 35.5 years.

The burglaries in Counts 11 and 12 both involved a degree of planning and the targeting of vulnerable victims. Thus, both involved higher culpability. Count 12 involved the theft of items of sentimental value, and so also involved greater harm. I propose, with totality in mind, to pass a sentence on Count 12 which reflects both offences. The sentence after trial would have been 3.5 years which, after deduction for plea and rounding down, results in a sentence of 2.5 years' imprisonment which will be consecutive to the sentences imposed on Counts 4 and 8-10, but concurrent

to the sentence imposed on Count 2. On Count 11 there will be a sentence of 12 months' imprisonment concurrent.

In my judgment, and rounding down, that adds a year to the minimum making a provisional total of 36.5 years which I round to an ultimate minimum term of 36 years.

Stand up please

Ben Field on Count 2 the sentence that I impose on you is one of life imprisonment, with a minimum term of 36 years. On the remaining Counts I impose the sentences that I have indicated, all of which will be concurrent to the life sentence.