



IN THE CROWN COURT AT BIRMINGHAM

THE QUEEN V. MOSES CHRISTENSEN

8 APRIL 2021

SENTENCING REMARKS OF THE HON. MR JUSTICE PEPPERALL

1. Moses Christensen, you were found guilty by a jury at Stafford Crown Court of the murder of Richard Hall and you pleaded guilty to an offence of having an offensive weapon in a public place.
2. This was a brutal and entirely senseless killing of an innocent stranger who had caused you no offence. I am satisfied on the evidence that you took a sick interest in extreme violence as a teenage boy. In particular, you took pleasure from watching footage of soldiers killing and torturing civilians in conflict situations. You fantasised about killing and came to describe it to the police as a lifelong ambition. You contemplated a career in the Royal Marines at least in part in order that you might find yourself in a position where you could lawfully kill.
3. A month before committing these offences, you purchased a knife with 5½-inch double-sided blades specifically in order to commit murder. Your weapon of choice was all the more fearsome for the serrations on one of its blades. You chose the knife because you already had an identical weapon that you had found suitable for killing sheep and you believed that it would prove to be an efficient weapon for murder. Furthermore, you purchased a knife sharpener to ensure that your weapons could be maintained in order to allow you to kill multiple victims.
4. When you set out from your home armed with your two knives and your knife sharpener on 9 August 2020, you were intent on committing one or more offences of murder. Over the next five days, you rambled around the countryside between Stourbridge and the Clee Hills seeking out potential victims. You coldly and methodically assessed a number of opportunities to kill before selecting Richard Hall as your victim. You quickly calculated that the chances of successfully murdering Mr Hall were high given the remote location, Mr Hall's age and your greater physical strength. You had the presence of mind to hide your knife, smile an insincere greeting in order to gain the benefit of surprise, and to push Mr Hall to the ground in order to maximise your chances of killing him efficiently. You then set about killing him with savage violence, stabbing Mr Hall in the head and chest with such force that one blow penetrated his skull and another fractured a rib. When it appeared that Mr Hall might be dead, you stabbed him again in the heart in order to make sure that he was not pretending. In all, Mr Hall suffered 19 ferocious stab wounds and a further 9 incised wounds.
5. You showed Mr Hall no mercy and you were later to tell the police that you felt no real remorse.
6. Mr Hall suffered catastrophic blood loss. Death followed swiftly but was not immediate. It is clear from the defensive injuries that Mr Hall knew that he was being attacked. He will have suffered a short period of intense pain and fear before losing consciousness.
7. Richard Hall was a 70-year-old engineer who was still working at the time of his death. He was a loving husband to Sheila, his wife of 34 years. He was also a much-loved stepfather to Stuart, father-in-law to Sue and grandfather to Sarah and Rachael. His widow and his stepson made

victim personal statements that were read to the court. Both statements incorporated tributes from Mr Hall's granddaughters. They each spoke movingly of the family's deep grief at Richard's cruel death. It is clear that the whole family has been devastated by this senseless crime and that Mr Hall's death has left an enormous hole in their lives.

8. Mr Hall's friend, business colleague and brother-in-law, John North, also made a victim personal statement. He described Richard Hall as a popular and active family man with a real love for his garden, walking and cycling.
9. On count 1, I am required by law to pass a sentence of life imprisonment and to fix the minimum term, being the period that you must serve in custody before you can apply to the Parole Board to be considered for release. Even after serving the minimum term, you will only be released from prison when the Parole Board decides that further imprisonment is no longer necessary for public protection. Upon your eventual release, you will remain under supervision on licence for the rest of your life and may be recalled to prison at any time.
10. In setting the minimum term, I must have regard to schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020. I am satisfied so that I am sure that you committed this offence with a knife that you took to the scene with intent to commit murder. Accordingly, I am required by paragraph 4 of schedule 21 to take a starting point of 25 years.
11. There are, however, a number of additional serious aggravating features in this case. First, I am sure that your offending was premeditated over, at the very least, some weeks before you murdered Mr Hall. Indeed, this was not simply an offence in which you armed yourself with a knife in a moment of anger. Rather, you selected and purchased a second knife and then a knife sharpener as you coldly planned your offending. Secondly, I am satisfied so that I am sure that you intended, should the opportunity have presented itself, to kill more than one person. Thirdly, you calmly selected your victim; sizing up the risks of being seen or overheard, of failing to overpower your victim or of someone intervening to prevent you from committing murder. As you chillingly explained to the police, you deliberately selected Mr Hall because you assessed that he was particularly vulnerable by reason of the remote location and his age. Fourthly, you committed this offence with great savagery.
12. The combination of these factors is, in my judgment, so serious that the seriousness of this murder was particularly high. I am therefore required by paragraph 3 of schedule 21 to take an even higher starting point of 30 years.
13. I turn then to mitigation. You were 21 at the time of your offending. You are a young man who has never been in trouble with the police before. I also take into account the fact that, while you contested this charge before the jury, you handed yourself in before the police even knew that Mr Hall had been murdered. Further, you have always accepted that you both killed and set out to kill. Indeed, you were remarkably frank in your police interviews.
14. I accept that you have suffered serious bouts of depression and have been diagnosed as suffering autistic spectrum disorder. I have therefore considered the guideline issued by the Sentencing Council for sentencing offenders with mental and developmental disorders. While the jury rejected your claim that your responsibility for your offending was substantially diminished, I must consider whether your culpability was nevertheless reduced to some lesser extent by such disorders. I accept the psychiatric evidence that your mental health has deteriorated since your arrest and that you have become psychotic in custody. In a post-verdict medical report, Dr Collins explains that, while assessment remains incomplete, you are likely to be suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. He advises that you continue to present a risk

both to others and yourself and that you require treatment in a psychiatric hospital. Upon the totality of the evidence called at your trial and in view of the jury's verdict, I reject, however, any suggestion that you were psychotic at the time of this offence. I conclude that your depression and autism did not impair your ability to exercise appropriate judgment, make rational choices or understand the nature or consequences of your actions. I do, however, accept that your inability to feel remorse for your actions and your lack of insight into the pain and suffering caused to so many by your callous attack on Mr Hall are explicable by your mental illness and your autism.

15. In my judgment, the appropriate minimum term in this case to take into account all of the aggravating and mitigating features is a period of 28 years.
16. As to count 2, the offence of carrying an offensive weapon was of course an aggravating feature of the offence of murder. It is nevertheless appropriate to pass a concurrent term of imprisonment. I take into account the guidelines issued by the Sentencing Council. This was a serious category 1A offence, but in view of the fearsome nature of the knife and your murderous intent it merited a sentence outwith the guidelines. After taking into account the aggravating and mitigating features of this case, the proper sentence after trial on count 2 was 3½ years' imprisonment. After credit for your early guilty plea, the sentence will be 28 months' imprisonment.
17. I therefore sentence you to life imprisonment on count 1 and direct that you will serve a minimum term of 28 years before you are eligible for parole. I sentence you to a concurrent sentence of 28 months' imprisonment on count 2. I direct that, in the calculation of the minimum term, you should have full credit for the time that you have been remanded in custody, which according to the information before me is 232 days. Further, I make a deprivation order in respect of the knives and knife sharpener, and order that you should pay the appropriate victim surcharge. You may go down.