

Sentencing remarks

R v Cameron Davis

Exeter Crown Court

11 July 2024

SENTENCE

1. Lorna England was the most remarkable and wonderful woman. Everyone who knew her basked in the goodness and light that she generated and the love that she radiated. Her 52 year long marriage to David was filled with bliss and happiness. David looked forward to many more years together as they approached their later life, walking hand in hand into the sunset supporting each other and still loving each other's company. They chatted over morning tea in bed and did Wordle together at breakfast. He remembers her infectious smile and the beautiful glint in her eye. We can see a glimpse of that in her photograph. She was his soulmate and best friend.
2. Their children Richard and Jackie were devoted to their mother and she was so proud of them, and her adored grandchildren, Sophie, Jake, Lewis and Harry. The feeling was mutual, they remember the many birthdays at Beefeater, swinging through the trees at Go Ape – and yes, that included Grandma on the ropes, not just the grandchildren – fun filled games of mini-golf at Dawlish followed by fish and chips on the sea front and holidays abroad too. They could also confide in Grandma and she always gave good advice. They had always been close to their grandmother as she and David had helped out both their children with childcare when their kids were little.
3. But she did not only provide laughter, wise words, generosity and a fun filled house. She had many practical skills. At the age of 74 she still helped her children with DIY and decorating, including changing windows. Her cooking was legendary and she even made her own bread and Chelsea buns. She kept a beautiful garden, and was very knowledgeable about plants.
4. She prided herself on keeping fit and looking after herself mentally as well, continuing to learn new skills. She and her daughter Jackie were fitness buddies –

they had such fun singing along in Zumba classes, learning new routines and having a laugh together. In fact both Jackie and Richard considered their mother to be their best friend. She cared so much for them and their families and was always interested in their news.

5. Lorna did not just share her joy and love with her immediate family, as the eldest of 9, she was devoted to all her siblings and their families – they looked up to her and treated her as a surrogate mother and she nurtured and supported all of them and her very many nieces and nephews. She also had a wide circle of friends and a busy social life.
6. She even had time to fit in a career – at Woolworths, Friends Provident and as a civil servant at DEFRA and picked up many friends along the way.
7. As we have heard from the moving statements read by family members today, they are overwhelmed with grief and loss and incomprehension that she could be stabbed to death by an unknown stranger on her way home from the shops, she had so much of her life still in front of her and so much still to give. They have been left reeling, unable to process how their lives have been ripped apart. They have been at court every day with such dignity and quiet composure.
8. She loved music too, and kept up to date. In the words of one of her favourites, Sam Ryder what they wanted with Lorna and were entitled to, was
More time, more life, more healing
More love, more us, more feeling
You took that from them.
9. Cameron Davis, you are to be sentenced for the murder of Lorna, but no punishment that you receive will ever compare to the pain that you have inflicted on Lorna and her family.
10. On 18 February 2023 you decided to kill a stranger if you did not get your way. You took your time selecting a large boning knife from Lidl which you bought for that purpose and drank vodka, smoked cigarettes and ate sweets outside the Wonsford Sports centre as you nurtured your sense of self-pity and revenge for not being given a bed in the hospital earlier. After arguing with your mother on the phone, you set off across Ludwell Valley Park and went to a quiet wooded area away from the CCTV cameras and selected a lone female on her way home from shopping. It was a planned and premeditated attack. It was the terrible fate of Lorna to be walking through that part of the park at the time that you were also there. You took

her phone off her – she had perhaps been trying to use it to summon help - but you were too quick. Her family will never know exactly what happened as you have refused to say. Your claim that you do not remember rings hollow when you have recalled other details. We do know however from her injuries and the eye witness account that Lorna fought back valiantly. She prevented you from stabbing her through the neck, sustaining deep cuts to her hands as she did so. I'm sure she did everything that she could to fight you off, but you stabbed her through the heart with moderate to strong force, sufficient to cut through all her winter clothing, through her body and into her spine. She fell to the floor instantly and died within moments and nothing could be done to save her.

11. You callously left her, sauntered off, telling a concerned passer by that she had had a fit and would need an ambulance. After throwing the knife into a stream and discarding your top, your bag and her phone in the park, you spent the rest of the afternoon drinking in various pubs and taking cocaine until you ran out of money when your mother refused to top up your bank account. When you were arrested you made obscene and offensive comments about Lorna and tried to blame others for his own acts.
12. You denied murder, accepting only manslaughter on grounds of diminished responsibility, but the truth was that you were able to make rational choices and exercise judgment. You chose to commit this shocking act to punish the hospital, mental health services, the police and all the people who had tried to support and help you, in anger because you did not get what you wanted.
13. You have Cluster B personality disorder with emotionally unstable, narcissistic and anti-social characteristics. You do not have a psychotic illness. You are wholly focussed on yourself and are attention-seeking. Your mood can change quickly and you are prone to anger. Your personality disorder does not significantly reduce your culpability and did not diminish your responsibility for Lorna's death, but I have taken it into account in so far as I can in accordance with the Sentencing Council guidelines on sentencing offenders with mental disorders. You did not choose your personality and it is a hard condition to manage.
14. It is a feature of your personality that you blame others and seek to shift responsibility for your own actions bound up with your sense of grievance and victimhood. But let me be absolutely clear: you were wholly responsible for Lorna's death and no-one but you is in any way to blame.

15. You planned to kill someone when you were angry when you did not get your way when the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital did not admit you as a patient. They did not admit you as a patient because after a thorough assessment of you, by two very experienced and well qualified psychiatrists and an advanced mental health practitioner, you did not need treatment. If there had been a need to admit you as an inpatient for treatment, a bed would have been made available. The decision not to admit you was not a resource-driven decision but based on clinical need and nor did you meet the threshold for being sectioned under the Mental Health Act.
16. Although you did not have a specifically allocated mental health worker from the Community Mental Health Team, you have been well supported by a range of services since your move to Devon in 2021. The staff at East Devon District Council worked tirelessly to support you when you were homeless, finding you emergency, then temporary and then permanent accommodation. You had the help of dedicated housing support workers who met you regularly, once or twice a week and kept in phone contact with you between times to help keep you on the rails. Their care and compassion was apparent from their evidence. You had the assistance of the Community Mental Health Team, the First Response Team, the Home Treatment Team and your GP amongst others. The voluntary agencies and charities such as Open Door, The Moorings, Quiet Minds, Exmouth Food Bank also supported you as much as they could and as much as you would let them. You repaid their support and kindness by setting fire to the permanent accommodation found for you, criticising them for being jobsworths and threatening to harm the council officer who had done most to help you. The truth is that everyone went above and beyond to support you and showed you empathy and kindness. You continued taking drugs and drinking to excess and did little to help manage your personality disorder.
17. You were in the habit of presenting to the emergency services – the police and A&E departments – complaining of mental ill health when you wanted attention and a bed. Your mental health was assessed on several occasions. You were found not to have a serious mental illness but to be malingering with what was described as a strong wilful component. You were either exaggerating or putting on symptoms for effect as part of your manipulative and controlling behaviour, or having pseudo-psychotic hallucinations. I shall give you the benefit of the doubt as to which.

18. You criticise the police for not arresting you when you attended the police station 3 weeks previously and other occasions when you rang 999 to report that you might harm yourself and someone else. You imply that it was somehow their fault for not stopping you. But with the information they had on 18 February and previous occasions, you could not be arrested in anticipation that you might commit some kind of offence when the threats were so vague. There was insufficient evidence to detain you. This is not a case of society being failed by the police or public services. Even if the EDDC staff and RD&E mental health nurses had been able to get through to the police on 111 when they called in the days preceding the attack, it is hard to imagine what they might have done. Only you knew that you would carry out the threats that you had made many times before as empty threats.
19. When you presented on 18 February, it appeared as attention seeking, time wasting as it had on so many previous occasions. You still had supported accommodation for 5 more days, the mental health services home treatment team were reaching out to you and you had an appointment with a psychiatrist the Community Mental Health Team and you had been told that EDDC would continue to support you with accommodation. It is wrong to say that appropriate help was not forthcoming.
20. As you are aware, a life sentence is mandatory as you have been convicted of murder. The court is also required to specify the minimum term of imprisonment which you will be required to serve by reference to Schedule 21 to the Sentencing Act 2020. The culpability is particularly high as you took the knife to the scene that you used to commit murder and the **starting point for your offence is 25 years**
21. 25 years is the starting, not the finishing point and the court's next task is to consider any aggravating and mitigating features that apply.
22. There was a very significant degree of both planning and premeditation, over and above that already taken into account in the 25 year starting point. You had decided to commit the crime when you were discharged from the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital in the late morning of 18 February 2023 at the very latest. You boasted to the paramedics en route to RD&E that you had a plan but refused to say what it was. I am sure that you bought the knife, not to harm yourself, but in order to kill a stranger, as you threatened you would do. I reach that conclusion because there was no evidence of you previously self-harming with knives, and just one reference

of you reporting to your GP in May 2020 that you had held a knife to your throat but could not do it.

23. I do not find that any of the other statutory factors to be considered as aggravating features apply. Lorna's family are painfully aware that you have shown no remorse whatsoever and that you still refuse to accept responsibility for Lorna's death. But whilst remorse can be a mitigating factor, lack of remorse is not treated as an aggravating feature, as it is implicit in your not guilty plea.
24. I do not accept that Lorna was particularly vulnerable because of age. Lorna was so much younger than her chronological years and would be the envy of many 50 and 60 year olds for her fitness and mental acuity. To suggest vulnerability would be to patronise and belittle her, when we know of her strength and resilience and how hard she tried to fight back against you. The fact that Lorna was alone in the wooded area of the park does not make her particularly vulnerable within the meaning of Schedule 21.
25. Your previous convictions are not relevant since they are for minor, unconnected matters and you were not in breach of any court orders at the time.
26. As for mitigation I do not accept that you had no intention to kill Lorna. The nature of the attack, the choice of the knife and the fact you told of your intention to kill prior to the act all make me sure that you intended not just to cause really serious harm but to kill her.
27. I accept that your behaviour was becoming more unstable in the weeks before the attack, as identified by those directly involved with you. They did their best to help you but your behaviour was becoming more destructive and self-destructive and you did not take steps to prevent it. You continued to take illegal drugs, drink heavily and had patchy compliance with your medication regime.
28. I have already stated that I accept that you have a significant element of personality disorder. You struggled from a young age. Your declining mental health does afford some limited mitigation. Limited because they were not public spirited cries for help, but part of your attention seeking, manipulative and controlling behaviour against the backdrop of your continuing drink and drug abuse, which fell far short of the partial defence.
29. Balancing the significant aggravating factors with the limited mitigation, the appropriate minimum term for your offence is **28 years**, a three year increase from the starting point. I shall reduce the length of the minimum term by the 508 days

that you have spent on remand since you were arrested so that the minimum term takes account of the entire period of your incarceration in respect of this offence. With arithmetic, the minimum term of 28 years is therefore **26 years and 222 days**.

30. It is important that you and everyone concerned with this case should understand what this means. The minimum term is not a fixed term after which you will automatically be released. It is the term that must be served before the Parole Board can undertake their first review of the case. They will review the risk that you present at that stage and will consider whether you can properly be released from custody subject to licence and, if so, on what terms.
31. If you are released you will be subject to licence for the rest of your life. If for any reason your licence is revoked, you will be recalled to prison to continue to serve your life sentence in custody.
32. It follows that unless and until the Parole Board consider that your release is appropriate you will remain in custody.
33. I order forfeiture and destruction of the knife used to kill Lorna. You will be required to pay the statutory surcharge of £187. I order that the psychiatric reports of Dr Sandford of 15 September, 19 October 2023 and 20 March 2024 be passed to the prison
34. I wish to thank all the police officers who investigated the case and for their detective work so that this case could be brought to justice. DI Dave Egan and DS Samantha Wenham who were the two Senior Officers involved with overarching responsibility for the case, the OIC DC Annette Goodland and the disclosure officer Helen Perry who did the bulk of the work drawing the case together and the Family Liaison Officers DC Leonie Drury and DC Lulu Pawley who supported Lorna's family throughout.
35. I thank all the witnesses who gave evidence and all those who came forward to assist the police. I wish to pay tribute once again to the jury who approached their role with such concentration and close attention to the evidence and the distressing details. I could see what a traumatic experience it was for them to perform their valuable public service.
36. I thank all counsel for their tour de force advocacy, their solicitors and all those who worked tirelessly behind the scenes, investigating, taking statements from witnesses and preparing all the documents.

37. To all the staff here at Exeter Crown Court especially our usher and court clerks, who have gone above and beyond to ensure a smooth running and efficient trial, nothing was too much trouble. I know I speak on behalf of everyone when I thank them for their hard work.
38. My last words must be to Lorna's amazing family to acknowledge once again their terrible loss and to thank them for sharing their powerful statements about the impact of this crime on their lives.

Mrs Justice Stacey

11 July 2024