

R v Kyle Clifford

Sentencing remarks

Cambridge Crown Court

1. Kyle Clifford, on 9 July last year you went to the home of your former girlfriend Louise Hunt and launched a murderous attack on her and her family. You first killed her mother Carol, who even on that day showed you nothing but kindness in the moments before you attacked her. You raped and killed Louise who had been as gentle as she could in ending her relationship with you, after your arrogance and anger proved too much for her to stand. Then you murdered Hannah Hunt, who had done nothing to harm you save supporting her little sister.
2. The evidence I have heard shows you to be a jealous man, soaked in self-pity; a man who holds women in utter contempt. This is no occasion to subject the family and friends of your victims to any delay or suspense. I therefore make clear at once that for each of the three murders, the sentence will be one of life imprisonment with a whole life order. That means a sentence from which you will never be released.
3. Your brutal and cowardly attack had been planned over about 11 days. You conducted extensive research into the movements of Louise's father John, into her mother's Facebook page, into buying a crossbow, a knife and an air pistol, and even into the weather on the day of the attack. You bought rope, duct tape, petrol cans, the knife you used in the attack and a crossbow. You wrote letters to your family dripping with self-pity. On the day of the attack you first parked well away from the Hunt family home to check if Louise's father was there, researching his work when you saw his car was outside the house. You approached a second time with a bag of Louise's clothes and a "thank you" card to Carol and John Hunt, obviously part of a plan to trick Mrs Hunt into letting you in the house.
4. You first talked to Carol Hunt on the doorstep and persuaded her to admit you. She spoke kindly to you but you then attacked her, stabbing her to death within moments of entering. You then left the house to collect the crossbow. Louise Hunt had been working in a building in the garden of the house. When she came in you restrained her with duct tape round her wrists and ankles and gagged her. You kept her there, alive, for over two and a half hours. She must have come to realise you had already killed her mother. During that time you raped her, then you murdered her by shooting her with the crossbow as her sister, Hannah, was about to enter the house. Hannah Hunt was in a rush. She saw you and realised something was

very wrong. You then shot her with the crossbow, causing an injury she could never hope to survive but she remained alive long enough to see the unspeakable violence you had already inflicted on her mother and her sister. Hannah was able to call for help but when the emergency services arrived they could not save her. You had fled. You were arrested the next day whereupon you made a last minute attempt to kill yourself.

5. I have heard John Hunt, Amy Hunt and Alex Klein speak of their dreadful loss. They were difficult to listen to, given the devastation and heartbreak they recounted. They spoke of Carol, Hannah and Louise as bringing joy, colour and happiness into the lives of everyone they knew. They were funny, hard-working and caring people. Each precious life, so full of potential, of future successes and celebrations, torn away by your appalling violence. The statements of John and Amy Hunt also demonstrated great courage and a determination that your terrible crimes will not define them or stop them leading the lives that Carol, Louise and Hannah Hunt would have wished for them. They show a gentle heroism of which you, Kyle Clifford, can only dream.
6. I have already announced the ultimate sentence I will impose. I now need to set out the technical legal reasoning behind the sentences I have decided upon. To deal with lesser matters, I will impose concurrent terms of 1 years' imprisonment for counts 1 and 2, the possession of the crossbow and the possession of the knife. I choose those sentences on the basis of category A2 under the Sentencing Council guidelines with the aggravation of their planned use and the threat the crossbow posed to police officers on 10 July. The only mitigation is your lack of previous convictions and, to a limited extent, your age. After a trial the sentence would have been 15 months but I deduct 20% for your guilty plea well before trial. The surcharge provisions apply and the order can be drawn up accordingly. I make orders for the deprivation of the items on the list uploaded onto the Digital Case System by the Prosecution, including the crossbow, your laptop and phone.
7. The proper sentence for rape is guided by the Sentencing Council. I find the rape of Louise Hunt to fall into the highest range of the top category, 1A, for the reasons identified by the Prosecution. There is no element of double counting as I have to impose a concurrent sentence given the nature of the sentence for the murders. I therefore take the upper end of the range, of 19 years. There is mitigation in your lack of previous convictions but serious aggravation in the planning of the crime. I will therefore pass a sentence of 20 years' imprisonment for that offence.
8. There are no Sentencing Council guidelines currently in force for the offence of false imprisonment and the circumstances of that offence are so intertwined with

the murders that it is hard to separate them, but in any event it has to be concurrent to the life sentences so double counting and totality are not issues. Louise Hunt's detention was prolonged, planned, in her own home, and it falls within the Sentencing Council definition of domestic abuse. For this offence you are also entitled to a deduction for your guilty plea. I therefore pass a sentence, after that 20% reduction, of 8 years' imprisonment.

9. Guidance on the imposition of the mandatory life sentence custodial term is set out in schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020. A whole life order is normally to be imposed for the murder of two or more people where each murder involves a substantial degree of premeditation or planning. Such a disposal is a rare one and reserved for only the most extreme cases. I have considered the guidance of the Court of Appeal in the decisions of *Stewart, Couzens, Tustin and Hughes* [2023] 1 Cr App R (S.) 17, *Kigundu* [2024] EWCA Crim 193 and *Osborne* [2024] EWCA Crim 1720. I will not add to the length of these remarks by rehearsing what is set out with great clarity in those judgements, save to highlight two points: First, schedule 21 must be applied in a flexible, not rigid, way to achieve a just result. Second, that although paragraph 2(2) of that schedule may have had in mind two murders planned then committed on separate occasions, those provisions do not exclude the most severe order being made for multiple killings on the same day.
10. I am satisfied so that I am sure that you both planned and contemplated killing all three of your victims. I have already mentioned your planning. You knew the routine and habits of that household. You clearly anticipated that Carol Hunt would be in the house as you went equipped to trick your way inside. You must have known Louise Hunt would be working in the building in the garden, as you knew her routine and she was the obvious target to be raped and murdered. You knew the routines of the household. You were there for over four hours and must have anticipated that Hannah Hunt would return. While you had used Louise Hunt's phone to ensure John Hunt would not be home any time soon, you made no such enquiry about Hannah. You would have known she wore a uniform for work which she would be bound to come home to change before doing anything else in the evening. I am sure that Hannah too was part of your premeditation and that you intended to murder her if the chance presented itself.
11. Those findings alone could lead to the imposition of a whole life term but there are four further very serious aggravating factors. First, the relevant section of the schedule is triggered by "*the murder of two **or more** persons*". It seems to me the fact there were "*more*" must be a relevant factor for a judge to have in mind: otherwise the Courts would be saying the murder of three people added nothing to the sentence for the murder of two, an unthinkable proposition. Second, the

rape of Louise Hunt of which the jury found you guilty last week, which offence was part of the same plan and the same course of conduct as the three killings. Third, these murders took place against a woman with whom you had been in an intimate relationship, and her family, and so is within the Sentencing Council guidance on Domestic Abuse, which context makes crimes even more serious. Fourth, the murders of Louise and Hannah Hunt must have involved them becoming aware of the murders you had already committed thereby inflicting dreadful mental suffering before death, a specified aggravating factor under the schedule.

12. You have been referred to at times as a former soldier. In many cases that would serve as significant mitigation. Not so in your case, however, as your two years in the army included 286 days at home claiming to be ill, you never saw active service, and your utility to the armed forces can be gleaned in a parting comment from your commanding officer that, *“His character is wholly unsuited to military employment and he has no care nor concern beyond himself”*.
13. There are three matters of mitigation. First, your lack of previous convictions. Second, your relative youth though you were already 26 years old by the time of these offences. Third, you pleaded guilty to the offences of murder, though not at the first opportunity. I have reflected on all of those three aspects. The Sentencing Council guidance makes clear that there may be cases where a guilty plea should lead the Court to draw back from imposing a whole life order: I have considered and rejected that course, as the factors in favour of such an order are so compelling that they far outweigh all those pieces of mitigation. I am left in no doubt that this is the sentence I must impose.
14. The sentences I pass are therefore:
 - (1) For possession of an offensive weapon, the crossbow, 1 year’s imprisonment, concurrent.
 - (2) For possession of an offensive weapon, the knife, 1 year’s imprisonment, concurrent.
 - (3) For the murder of Carol Hunt, life imprisonment with a whole life order, the early release provisions are not to apply.
 - (4) For the false imprisonment of Louise Hunt, 8 years’ imprisonment, concurrent.
 - (5) For the rape of Louise Hunt, 20 years’ imprisonment, concurrent.
 - (6) For the murder of Louise Hunt, life imprisonment with a whole life order, the early release provisions are not to apply.
 - (7) For the murder of Hannah Hunt, life imprisonment with a whole life order, the early release provisions are not to apply.

15. I thank Counsel and the legal teams for both the Prosecution and the Defence for all their hard work. I thank the police for the care they have shown in this investigation and in doing whatever could be done to help the family after these dreadful crimes. Finally, I pay tribute to the astonishing dignity and courage with which Carol, Louise and Hannah's family and friends have conducted themselves throughout these proceedings.

Joel Bennathan

11 March 2025