



IN THE CROWN COURT AT LOUGHBOROUGH

THE KING V. PETER BROOKS

9 JUNE 2025

SENTENCING REMARKS OF THE HON. MR JUSTICE PEPPERALL

1. Peter Brooks, at the conclusion of the trial, I directed that your attendance at court for this sentencing hearing was required. To that end, I wrote to the prison governor to ask for her assistance in ensuring that you would be present in court for this hearing. You have been assessed as fit for court and a nurse was made available to accompany you to court and ensure effective pain relief. Nevertheless, you have again refused to attend court. That outcome will be no surprise to seasoned observers of this case.
2. While you have been assessed as fit to attend court, I am told that the assessment of the prison governor, on medical advice, is that your attendance should not be secured by the use of force. I therefore reluctantly concluded that I should sentence you by video link. I do so because there is no guarantee that an adjournment would secure your attendance at court and, after waiting so long for justice, the Perks family are entitled to have this case finally concluded today.
3. When adjourning this case for sentence, I also directed that a pre-sentence report be prepared addressing the issue of dangerousness. You refused to attend the interview with the probation officer and accordingly there is no pre-sentence report. You did, however, cooperate in attending an interview with the forensic psychiatrist, Dr Gibbon.
4. I am not asked to adjourn sentence to allow a second opportunity to have a pre-sentence report, and do not consider that I should do so. There is no reason to believe that you would co-operate if given a second chance. In any event, having presided over your trial and in view of the psychiatric evidence before the court, I do not consider that there is any need to adjourn sentence.
5. Peter Brooks, you have been found guilty of attempting to murder Graeme Perks by both fire and stabbing, of attempted arson with intent to endanger life, and of possession of a bladed article in a public place. You are a doctor who specialised in treating burns. You must have had substantial professional experience of treating those who have suffered appalling and painful burns, and yet you attempted to set a fire in the middle of the night intending to kill your former colleague and to endanger the lives of any other occupants as they lay sleeping in their beds. Further, you were a trained surgeon, and yet you plunged

a knife into your colleague's body passing through his liver, his pancreas, his duodenum and his inferior vena cava with the same murderous intent.

6. The court has heard victim personal statements from Graeme Perks, his wife Beverley and their children Henry, Beatrix and Angus. Whatever your own views of him, I am satisfied that Graeme Perks is a deeply impressive man. He has had a stellar career as a surgeon, but more importantly it is obvious that he is a decent and compassionate man, and a much-loved husband and father. While he has every reason to be angry, it is a mark of the man that he bears you no ill-feeling, hatred or bitterness. Indeed, he was an obviously honest and straightforward witness at trial. He was astute to tell the jury only the limited things that he remembered and perceived from this attack. He had the integrity and detachment to refuse to fill in the gaps in that limited recollection even when he must have known that his amnesia left it open to you to claim falsely that you had acted in self-defence. Further, while he suffered terribly at your hands, he has the compassion to recognise that this case is a tragedy for both families, and to be concerned less for himself than for the psychological impact upon his wife and children.
7. Beverley and Henry Perks were exposed to the full horror of your crimes and the realisation that they might have been burned alive as they slept in their beds. They are understandably anxious and unable to escape intrusive thoughts of these events. Beatrix and Angus were not in the house that night. The realisation that they were not there to help their family in this moment of crisis has left them with an entirely natural but misplaced sense of guilt.
8. Your crimes have robbed Graeme and Beverley Perks of the carefree, healthy and adventurous retirement that they deserved. Further, your actions have caused substantial psychological trauma to this family as you invaded the safety of their home. Your crimes have caused recurrent nightmares and anxiety, affected careers, earnings and relationships, and required professional counselling.
9. In addition, your crimes caused significant damage to property and expense that totalled over £74,000.
10. While the jury's verdicts establish your guilt of the offences on this indictment, it remains for me to resolve the remaining issues of fact in this case that are relevant to the question of sentence. In making findings of fact, I take into account all of the evidence called at the trial and keep in mind that I must only make findings that are adverse to you in the event that the prosecution has succeeded in proving those aggravating features to the criminal standard. Upon the jury's verdicts and the evidence called at your trial, I am sure of the following matters:
 - a) First, you were fixated on your employment difficulties and, whatever the rights and wrongs of those difficulties, you blamed Mr Perks for your troubles. Your key demand in negotiations to resolve your employment

issues was that Mr Perks should be required to leave the Trust. Upon that evidence and your extreme actions on the night of 14 January 2021, I am sure that your simmering sense of grievance towards Mr Perks developed into deep anger.

- b) Secondly, when you went into your garage in the early hours of 14 January, you set about loading your bicycle with everything that you would need to break into Mr Perks' home and murder him by burning his house down. You armed yourself with a crowbar to force entry; two containers of highly flammable fuel, matches and a lighter to set a fire; and a knife in order to be prepared should you be disturbed. Further, you wrapped up warm in thermal underclothes, a camouflage suit and balaclava for your murderous expedition. I am sure that from at least the time that you set about preparing your bicycle that night, you were intent on murder. It is not, however, possible on the evidence to be sure that you planned these offences for more than a few hours before you broke into the Perks' home.
- c) Thirdly, on arrival at the Perks' property, you used the crowbar to break into the conservatory and then to smash your way into the living room. Having done so, you brought the fuel containers into the house and doused the ground floor liberally. In particular, you doused a substantial volume of fuel in the hallway and across the full width of the staircase. Had that fuel been lit, I am sure that it would have caused an intense and catastrophic fire that would have been very difficult for the three people sleeping soundly in their beds to survive. I am sure that you had both the means and the settled intent to light that fuel in order to kill your intended victim.
- d) Fourthly, Graeme Perks was woken by your actions and came downstairs to investigate. He disturbed you before you could light the fire. Although his perception at the time was that he confronted you outside, that was because he recalled his feet being wet. I am, however, sure that he did not go outside. Had he done so, he would have had to walk over broken glass both at the internal door between the living room and the conservatory and then at the external conservatory door. Further, he would have had to pass through the jagged glass edges of the two broken doors. And yet – despite being naked with nothing on his feet - he did not suffer any glass injuries. The sensation that he recalls of his feet being wet is, in my judgment, consistent with the amount of fuel that you had deposited around the ground floor of the house.
- e) Fifthly, while the jury rejected your defence of self-defence, it would have been open for it to do so on the basis that your reaction to some actual or perceived threat was not reasonable. I am, however, sure upon the evidence that you were the sole aggressor and that Mr Perks did not threaten you with the crowbar or any other weapon. The finding of Mr Perks' DNA on the crowbar is, in my judgment, consistent with it being left on the floor of his house. It is simply not credible that he walked over broken glass and through the jagged edges of the broken doorframes out into the garden and then back again without injury and that he wielded a crowbar in the garden as a weapon and, after being stabbed, carried it back into the house before depositing it in the conservatory.

11. This case is exceptionally unusual in that you have been convicted of two offences of attempting to murder the same person in the same night. First, you attempted to murder Graeme Perks as he lay sleeping in his bed by setting a fire. Then, when you were disturbed in your attempt to murder Mr Perks by fire, you attempted to murder him by inflicting the most appalling stab injury. While you have been convicted of two separate offences, these offences cannot properly be considered in isolation. Taken together, they represent a sustained and determined attempt to commit murder.
12. I will therefore pass concurrent sentences on counts 1 and 2 that reflect both offences. While the offence of attempted arson with intent to endanger life was separately indicted, I shall treat that offence as a serious aggravating feature of your attempt to murder Mr Perks by fire, and again pass a concurrent sentence for the offence of attempted arson. Likewise, the carrying of a knife is an integral feature of the offence of attempted murder by stabbing and I shall again pass a concurrent sentence. Accordingly, the sentence passed on the two counts of attempted murder will reflect your overall criminality on this indictment.
13. In passing sentence, I consider the guidelines issued by the Sentencing Council for offences of attempted murder, arson with intent to endanger life, possession of a bladed article, dangerousness and totality.
14. This was a premeditated attempt to commit murder in which you armed yourself with a crowbar to force entry, a substantial volume of fuel to set a devastating fire, and a knife should you encounter any resistance. I am in no doubt that the combination of those factors indicate that your culpability for these offences was very high.
15. Mr Perks suffered an appalling stab injury. It was only due to the actions of his wife and son in compressing the wound, the prompt attention of paramedics and the extraordinary surgical skill of the Major Trauma team at the Queen's Medical Centre in Nottingham that Mr Perks survived. Mr Perks has made a good but incomplete recovery from his severe physical injuries. Most seriously the thrombosis of his repaired inferior vena cava has compromised the venous return of blood to his heart. Mr Perks has been deprived of his former physical fitness and can only now tolerate moderate exercise. Furthermore, he suffers atrial fibrillation. The harm that you did was not, however, solely physical. Your crimes have had a profound psychological impact upon the Perks family, and particularly on Beverley and Henry Perks who might well have perished in the fire that you planned and who are unlikely ever to escape from the horrors of that night.
16. In my judgment, this case involves serious physical and psychological harm, albeit thankfully Mr Perks is not dependent upon others for his care. I therefore treat this as a category 2 harm case.

17. The attempt murder guidelines indicate a starting point of 30 years' imprisonment with a category range of 25-35 years. There are, in my judgment, two further aggravating features of your case.
 - a) First, you broke into the Perks' home in the dead of night. You attempted to murder Mr Perks in his own home where he should have been safe.
 - b) Secondly, I treat as a serious aggravating feature of your case that your attempt to murder Mr Perks by fire put Beverley and Henry Perks at serious risk of death. Indeed, the jury convicted you of attempting to commit arson with intent to endanger life.
18. I turn then to the mitigating features of your case.
 - a) First, I take into account that you are not just a man with no previous convictions but that you were of positively good character. You had done much good in your surgical career and I particularly take into account your service with the humanitarian medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières, your work in respect of child protection safeguarding, with homeless charities and as a school governor. Further, I take into account the positive character references provided by your patients and by your colleagues in connection with your earlier workplace issues. That said, good character cannot provide substantial mitigation in respect of such serious offences.
 - b) Secondly, I take into account your diagnosis of mild autism spectrum disorder. Your autism and your underlying personality help to explain the rigidity of your thought processes and your difficulties with interpersonal skills, but do not even start to explain or excuse these appalling crimes. I am satisfied on the medical evidence that you do not suffer any psychiatric illness. Nevertheless, there is evidence that your life was falling apart in January 2021. Your employment difficulties were coming to a head and you anticipated that the disciplinary hearing that opened earlier that week was likely to lead to your dismissal, the loss of your home and the breakdown of your marriage. While not mentally ill, you were under very significant pressure. In my judgment, your anger at the perceived injustice and hopelessness of your situation led to this explosion of very serious violence.
19. Your counsel argues that there is some limited evidence of remorse. I cannot detect remorse, but rather a fixed view that you were hounded out of your employment by what you describe as the "medical mafia" and self-pity at the situation in which you now find yourself.
20. Balancing the aggravating and mitigating features of this case and your overall criminality on this indictment, I consider that the appropriate determinate sentence in this case is 33 years' imprisonment.
21. I turn then to the guidelines for offences of arson with intent to endanger life. Such offences are for the completed offence and there was of course no fire in this case. Nevertheless, I am sure that you fully intended to ignite the fuel had you not been disturbed and accordingly only limited downward adjustment is

required. If lit, there was a high risk of very serious physical harm to the house and its occupants. The actual damage in this case was significant but was caused by fuel contamination rather than fire. I treat this therefore as a case involving category 2 harm.

22. Having determined the proper determinate sentence, I return to the careful stepped approach in the attempted murder guideline. I am next required to consider the issue of dangerousness. Taking into account the facts of this case, I have no doubt whatever that you pose a significant risk to members of the public – and particularly Graeme Perks - of serious harm occasioned by the commission of further specified offences. I am fortified in that view by Dr Gibbon's helpful report and oral evidence. Further, I consider that the seriousness of the offences of attempted murder is such as to justify the passing of a sentence of life imprisonment and that the risk that you pose to the public cannot be adequately met by an extended determinate sentence. I am therefore required by s.285 of the Sentencing Act 2020 to pass sentences of life imprisonment.
23. I am required by law to fix the minimum term, being the period that must be served in custody before you can apply to the Parole Board to be considered for release. While I start with the notional determinate sentence in this case of 33 years, two further adjustments are required. First, that sentence must be reduced by one-third in order to reflect the fact that there will be no early release. The minimum term in your case is therefore 22 years.
24. Secondly, you have already been in custody for over 4 years awaiting trial. That time must count towards your sentence and accordingly the adjusted minimum term in your case is 17 years and 223 days.
25. I therefore sentence you as follows:
 - a) For both offences of attempted murder, I sentence you to life imprisonment and order that you will serve a minimum term of 17 years and 223 days (being 22 years less the time that you have already served in custody). Such sentences will run concurrently.
 - b) For the offence of attempted arson with intent to endanger life, I sentence you to 6 years' imprisonment.
 - c) For the offence of having a bladed article, I sentence you to 18 months' imprisonment.
 - d) Again, the shorter sentences for the offences of attempted arson and possession of the knife will run concurrently.
26. While it is well known that offenders sentenced to a determinate sentence of imprisonment are released early and serve the balance of their sentence in the community, it is important that both you and the public understand that when a judge imposes a sentence of life imprisonment, the offender must serve every

single day of the minimum term. Furthermore, even after serving the minimum term, the offender will only be released from prison when the Parole Board decides that further imprisonment is no longer necessary for public protection. Upon eventual release, the offender will remain under supervision on licence for the rest of his life, and may be recalled to prison at any time.

27. Further, I order that you should pay the appropriate statutory surcharge. I make a forfeiture order in respect of the knife and I make a restraining order to protect the Perks family in the terms of the draft.