

**R. v Alex Rose Charles Pardoe and Tara Knaggs**

**Sentencing Remarks**

**Guildford Crown Court**

**22<sup>nd</sup> Sept 2025**

**Introduction**

**You may all remain seated for the moment.**

Alex Rose and Charles Pardoe on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September you were convicted by the jury of the murders of William Birchard and Darren George, who were just 21 and 22 years of age respectively at the time they met their deaths. Alex Rose, you had pleaded guilty shortly before the jury was sworn to perverting the course of justice by falsely reporting your Ford Raptor as stolen. You Tara Knaggs were convicted of assisting Alex Rose following the commission of his offences in his determined efforts to flee the jurisdiction.

The facts can be simply stated but the simplification of those facts does not alleviate or remove the pain, suffering, and grief suffered by the families of both deceased young men. In that regard no sentence that the Court imposes can equate to the loss of life and no one should consider that that is so.

This Court must now impose sentences upon each of you, the duration of which are equal to the seriousness of your offences applying the relevant guideline issued by the Sentencing Council.

**The facts**

You Alex Rose thought your home was being targeted by a group of young men who were apparently trespassing in the grounds of St Paul's School behind your house. Your business premises had been burgled earlier last year and when no one was arrested you told the police you were investigating it yourself. It is clear to me that you decided you would deal with the group yourself, if you could find them and to that end you recruited your co-Defendant.

You Alex Rose and you Charles Pardoe searched on foot for them and then got into Alex Rose's pick-up truck to continue. That was a co-ordinated search with another man who drove in convoy with you. You Charles Pardoe were the person in Alex Rose's vehicle maintaining that contact. You had remained together for in the region of an hour working together to search and you Charles Pardoe chose to remain with Alex Rose and join him for the continued search by road.

When you saw William Birchard and Darren George on William Birchard's e-bike you decided they were the culprits and chased them quite literally to their deaths. In fact, they had nothing whatsoever to do with the group who had been in the school grounds as was conclusively proved by the prosecution. They were travelling in no particular hurry until you accelerated behind them, causing William Birchard to speed up to try to get away from you chasing them, causing the bike to veer across to the wrong side of the road at one point. You pursued them at speeds of around twice the speed limit to the Sunbury Cross Roundabout where William Birchard tried in vain to escape you by navigating the roundabout the wrong way but you followed very closely behind him onto the slip road as he rode across it against the intended flow of traffic until you caught up with him and deliberately drove into the rear of the e-bike, causing both young men to be thrown off it with the force of the collision.

William Birchard died immediately, having suffered multiple fractures, abrasions and skin loss to his face, head, body and limbs indicating a severe degree of force had been applied to the front of his head causing fatal injuries to the front and back of his brain.

Darren George suffered an accelerating fall and as well as multiple fractures, and abrasions to his head, face, torso and limbs he sustained a catastrophic brain injury from which it was almost inevitable he would not survive but he remained alive to be taken to hospital where he was pronounced dead.

They must have been utterly terrified in their final moments after you had hunted them down.

Afterwards, your conduct speaks volumes about the weak characters you both evidently are. Neither of you did anything to see if either young man could be helped; you did not stop, get out or check on them. You did not call for an ambulance. Neither of you has at any time then or since demonstrated to this court a shred of remorse for your heartless conduct.

After Alex Rose had driven you back to where it was parked near his home, you Charles Pardoe drove away in your van and past the collision site where again you did not stop to check on the two young men who were still lying motionless in the road.

The emergency services had been called by Mr Singh a decent, public-spirited and brave man who also made sure they were safe from other vehicles driving in their direction.

The next 20 hours were consumed by you Alex Rose doing everything in your power to evade justice. You falsely reported the vehicle you had used to murder two young men to the police as stolen, after parking it away from your house and going home on foot. Then began your mission to get enough money together to escape the United Kingdom.

You Tara Knaggs did all you could to help Alex Rose in this endeavour, to assist him to try to evade justice by making concerted efforts to book flights for you both to flee the jurisdiction after booking a hotel room to lie low in before going to Birmingham airport, well over 100 miles from your home. You were within 2.5 hours of being on a flight when you were both arrested.

### **Victim Personal Statements**

I turn to the grief and suffering you have caused. The Court has received powerful and poignant victim personal statements.

Lives have changed forever and will never be the same. Mothers and fathers whose lives stopped on hearing of the deaths of their sons.

Darren Bradley George's mother Dawn, having described the effect on her of the loss of her much loved and funny boy and others ended with:

All I know is that our family will never be the same again.

All I know is that I will never be the same person again.

I read this victim statement to my husband - Darren's dad who is a man of few words and I will end by sharing what he succinctly and simply said. My husband uttered quietly:

"I loved that boy."

Darren George's sister Emma speaks of her grief and the closeness of their relationship and how she felt instinctively something was wrong with her brother before she was told that night, as well as her feelings of guilt when contemplating ordinary pleasures such as going out.

David Waller, William Birchard's father who has attended every court hearing, visits his beloved son's place of rest almost daily and whose grief for his beloved son William is almost palpable.

Ellie Holford, William Birchard's stepmother:

As a family of mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, grannies, aunts, uncles and friends we are left with the deepest of aches which has completely reshaped our lives, leaving us shattered.

William Birchard's mother Victoria:

The impact of losing William on our family has been catastrophic. We will never get over this. The pain is still the same as it was at the beginning on the first night.

To say we miss him is an understatement. The ache in our heart hurts and is a pain that never goes away.

William Stacey John Birchard, our handsome, funny, bright boy.

The Court offers its condolences to members of the deceased's family and pays tribute to them for the dignity displayed during the trial. I repeat that the loss of life, so rich, can never be measured by the length of any custodial sentence.

**Tara Knaggs** I deal with you first:

Realistically a Pre-Sentence Report was not requested on your behalf, and the court did not require one; your criminal conduct in assisting a man who had killed two others is of the most serious within the ambit of the offence of which you were convicted.

You were convicted by the jury of Count 6 on the Indictment For the offence of assisting an offender.

Since the relevant offence committed by Alex Rose is murder, the maximum sentence this court may pass upon you for the offence of assisting an offender is 10 years' imprisonment.

The matters to which this court has had regard in determining the correct length of sentence in your case include:

- a. The nature and extent of the criminality of Alex Rose.
- b. The nature and extent of the assistance provided to him and
- c. The extent to which your actions have damaged the interests of justice.

Dealing with each of those in turn:

- a. Alex Rose murdered two people.
- b. I find as a matter of fact that you were aware of the seriousness of his offending at an early stage. The evidence demonstrates that you were in telephone contact with Rose at the time of the collision. You remained in close contact with Rose over two days, from the time of the killings to the time of your arrests. The evidence of your conduct with Alex Rose following the killings demonstrates you were instrumental and pro-active in the actions carried out with the intention of leaving the jurisdiction.
- c. By their verdicts, the jury found that you had booked hotel accommodation and/or flights out of the UK. More widely, the evidence disclosed that you assisted Rose by maintaining telephone contact with others who could facilitate his escape and, on your own case, allowed Rose to use your mobile telephone in order to do so. Further, you paid for taxi journeys away from Sunbury and to Birmingham, you allowed your bank account to be used to pay for flights and you carried £4,095 cash in your hand luggage as well as the few personal items you were carrying for both you and Rose.
- d. You and he were within 2½ hours of escaping the jurisdiction. By your actions, Alex Rose's arrest was delayed, and additional police

resources were required to locate him. Whilst you were on the run, Rose managed to dispose of his mobile telephones and the keys to his Raptor.

**As to mitigation:**

**Tara Knaggs:** You were 24 years old then and are 25 years of age now. You have never before been convicted of any offence.

You are the daughter of parents who attended the trial; you come from a family who love and support you. I have taken into account the letters to the court written by both of your parents, by Imogen Jones who now regards you not as a future sister-in-law but as a sister and by Monica King who all speak of your kind and quiet nature attest to your positive qualities including your loving care for your elderly grandmother. In addition, today the court has received and I have read a file containing a letter which is not signed but which I take to be written by you expressing your condolences for the families of William Birchard and Darren George, a number of notes which set out your positive behaviour whilst in custody and a series of certificates for a variety of courses you have successfully completed, demonstrating you have tried to use your time in custody constructively.

On your behalf it is submitted that your actions were relatively limited. On analysis, I cannot agree; although you only used the hotel room for a short time, its purpose was to hide in before getting to the airport and all the evidence shows that your efforts to book flights were persistent and determined.

It is submitted those actions were at the direction of Alex Rose. There is no evidence from either of you in support of that, although of course it was in order to help him escape you acted. The evidence presented to this court demonstrated that in the hours after the murders, you went with Alex Rose to the south coast and back to the home you shared before accompanying him to Oxford then Birmingham. It was clear that your intention was to travel with him and that you were determined to ensure you both departed the UK that night before he could be arrested. You remained with him or in close contact with Alex Rose from the time of the commission of the murders until his arrest two days later.

It is true that you used your real name and details but of course your intention was to protect the man you were shielding from detection and at that time you no doubt felt safe because you were not a suspect in any crime.

It is also true to say that your actions did not result in their intended outcome because Alex Rose was apprehended before boarding the flight, but you were both within 2.5 hours of doing so.

In the context of the offence, I accept you acted out of a misguided sense of loyalty to the man you were in an intimate relationship with.

There are no Guidelines provided by the Sentencing Council for the offence of assisting an offender, but I have been assisted by the written and oral submissions by counsel on both sides in respect of this with reference to the relevant authorities provided by each.

There is no question that this offence is so serious that no sentence other than an immediate custodial sentence is appropriate.

I take into account the productive use of your time thus far in custody; I have seen the certificates of the courses you have successfully completed. In addition, I am told and I have seen confirmation of the fact you have employment available for when you are released.

I make a deprivation order for the £4095 cash in your possession.

After you have served up to 40%<sup>1</sup> of the sentence this court is about to pass upon you, you will be released on licence. If you commit any offence of any nature whilst on licence or breach any of the terms of your licence, you are liable to be recalled by the Secretary of State to serve all or part of the remainder of your sentence in custody. A victim surcharge will be applied and a collection or made in respect of it. I make no other financial order, you having been remanded in custody since your arrest. The days served so far will count towards your sentence.

Balancing all matters, the sentence of the court is one of 3 years imprisonment.

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<sup>1</sup> *corrected after sentence*

## **Alex Rose and Charles Pardoe**

Alex Rose and Charles Pardoe for the offence of murder there is but one sentence prescribed by law; that is, life imprisonment.

The court is required to specify the minimum term that must elapse before each of you can be considered for release on licence by the Parole Board.

This case falls within paragraph 3 of Schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020 since it involves the murder of two persons, usually with a starting point of 30 years because you have murdered two people.

### ***Aggravating factors***

There are factors which aggravate the seriousness of the offences of murder so that in respect of you Alex Rose the provisions of paragraph 4 of schedule 21 are met and these are offences involving particularly high culpability:

- I reject the submissions made on your behalf in respect of the taking the car to the scene as a weapon; you were hunting for the would-be burglars and undoubtedly your intention was to at least cause them really serious harm.
- I find so that I am sure that your mindset as you commenced and continued your search for the burglars was to effect retribution.
- I am sure the evidence of Deborah Aresu the road collision expert was accurate in relation to her assessment that the Ford Raptor was driven between the first two markers extremely closely to the kerb behind the e-bike. She described it as the raptor hugging the kerb and so trying to prevent the e-bike from passing. In her opinion, which I find so that I am sure was correct, that suggests the raptor was approaching from behind deliberately close to kerb with a deliberate attempt to mow the e-bike down.
- You Alex Rose took the leading role in these joint offences of murder.
- Further, I find so that I am sure that you Alex Rose took the car to the scene not simply as a mode of transport but with the intention of using it as a weapon from at least the point at which you saw and pursued the e-bike, or at least to have it available to you for use as a weapon. In addition, it was then used to murder two people.



That means these offences of murder for you involve particularly high culpability.

In respect of you Charles Pardoe I am not satisfied so that I am sure you were party to that intention.

- I find in respect of each of you so that I am sure your victims were vulnerable road users on an e-bike without any protection for their heads or bodies. That fact must have been obvious to you by the time you deliberately rammed the bike with your truck.
- In addition, in respect of you Alex Rose although the dangerousness of your driving in the commission of these offences does not aggravate them because that factor is contained within your deliberate use of your vehicle as a weapon by afterwards driving against the flow of the traffic onto a dual carriageway where you performed a 3 point turn caused an obvious risk to other road users.

Those are significant aggravating features which must increase the sentences beyond the starting point before mitigating factors are considered. I have tempered those sentences not only with regard to the mitigating factors but also taking into account the principle of totality.

In respect of you Alex Rose the other associated offence of perverting the course of justice I treat as a serious aggravating factor but as part of your global sentence, having regard to the principle of totality.

In determining the length of sentence for that offence, for which the maximum sentence is life imprisonment, in my judgment the level of culpability is within category A, because the underlying offences were of the utmost seriousness.

In considering the level of harm your actions caused, I find there was some impact on the administration of justice. By the time you reported your Ford Raptor as stolen the day after you had parked it away from your home, it had in fact been found by the police. Notwithstanding that, because of your false report it remained necessary for the police to prove that it had not been stolen as a result of a burglary, as you had falsely alleged, in order to prove that you were the driver at the relevant time. As a consequence, your home and the vehicle were forensically examined. Furthermore, your false claim that the keys to the Raptor had been stolen and your disposal of them hindered the examination of the Raptor and its telematics system. I therefore find the

harm falls into category 2, with a starting point of 2 years and a range of 1-4 years. The sentence in your case after trial would be one of 2 years imprisonment.

For the offence of perverting the course of justice, your sentence will be reduced by 10% for your guilty plea on the first day of the trial.

### ***Mitigating factors***

Although your action in deliberately ramming the ebike with a powerful pickup truck at speed would inevitably have at least caused catastrophic injuries to its riders, I cannot be sure it would have caused their deaths.

**Alex Rose** you were 29 years old when you committed these criminal offences and are now 30 years of age. Although it is correct that you had been released under investigation in respect of an allegation of assault at the time you committed these offences, you are a man without previous convictions which is how this court will regard you.

I have considered and taken into account the letters written about you, including that from Sophia Latimer of His Majesty's Prison at Wandsworth which attests to the support you have provided for other inmates who are struggling notwithstanding this was your first experience of prison and you faced the most serious charges. In addition, she has informed the court about positive progress whilst on remand including successfully completing a number of courses. I have read and taken into account the further letters of reference as to your positive traits uploaded on your behalf from your friend of 10 years Jake Hill who has worked for you, Ian Hazel who coached you in football for 9 years and whose letter chimes with that of Ms Latimer in describing your conduct towards others.

**Charles Pardoe** you were 24 years old then and are 25 years of age now. I have made allowance for the fact you were under 25 years old at the time.

In addition, your role was a lesser one in the commission of the offences which I have reflected in the ultimate sentences passed. You had attended at Alex Rose's request because you worked for him but you chose to not only help search but go with Alex Rose in his vehicle to continue it and you were a significant and active party to that search.

You have four previous convictions for 7 offences involving dishonesty but also including dangerous driving in 2019 which of course is a feature of this case. You were

however not the driver on this occasion and you were in terms of your age now you were significantly younger then. I bear in mind, as is submitted on your behalf, that you have no previous convictions for offences of violence, offences involving weapons, or public order offences.

On your behalf your father, Peter Pardoe, has written a poignant letter to the court reflecting the emotions of both your parents as well as your positive character traits of altruism and the hard work and education you had been investing in your life for your future.

In addition, your friend Luke Doherty has spoken of the support you have provided to him over his own tragic bereavement and of his experience of the effect of these events upon you.

I have taken all of those matters into account in respect of each of you in determining the sentences which each of you must serve.

Surcharges will be drawn up by the clerk of the court and applied with collection orders.

### **Sentences**

The sentences I pass upon each of you will be concurrent with one another taking into account all the aggravating and mitigating factors which arise in each of your cases and the principle of totality.

### **Alex Rose**

Count 1 Life with a minimum term of 34 years.

Count 2 Life with a minimum term of 34 years concurrent.

C3 5 perverting course justice 21 months as a determinate sentence to be served concurrent.

Because you have served 422 days in custody thus far, that means you will serve 32 years 308 days.

### **Charles Pardoe**

Count 1 Life with a minimum term of 29 years

Count 2 Life with a minimum term of 29 years concurrent

Because you have served 187 days in custody thus far, that means you will serve 28 years 178 days.

If I have miscalculated either of the days to be served, the case can be brought back in front of me within 56 days.