

IN THE CROWN COURT

AT PRESTON

R

v

JOHN COWEN

SENTENCING REMARKS

1. Mr Cowen, you were born on 06/04/94 and you are now 31 years old.
2. You are a man of previous good character until convictions for a racially aggravated public order offence in 2023 and harassment in 2024.
3. At a finding of fact hearing which took place on 10/09/25, a jury found that you had committed the act of wounding on 14/09/24, by stabbing Mr Thomas Carey with a kitchen knife at a Countdown event at the Wainwright Club in Blackpool.
4. You did not participate in that finding of fact hearing, as I had previously ruled that you were unfit to stand trial.
5. You had been arrested at the scene and interviewed. It is clear from your answers and manner during the course of that interview that you were suffering from delusions about the world around you and your involvement in it, which directly influenced your actions and interactions.
6. It became more pronounced throughout the court process in that you were refusing to accept the validity of the proceedings and, at times, you would make deliberately provocative and offensive statements to disrupt court hearings.
7. As a result, you were transferred and have been in the care of Guild Lodge. It was hoped/believed that assessment and treatment would result in you being sufficiently able to participate in proceedings. However, you have remained resistant to treatment, believing the involvement of the doctors is part of the wider conspiracy against you.

8. The clinical findings of two experienced medical practitioners, Dr Lucy Shaw and Dr Asif Mir, were that you were therefore unfit to stand trial.
9. That has meant that there has never been an explanation for your actions on 14/09/24.
10. You were someone known to many of the other attendees from various connections through a mutual love of Countdown and attending at similar events over the years.
11. The incident was captured on CCTV and witnessed by many at the event. You entered the venue and went straight for Mr Carey. You were in possession of two kitchen knives, one of which was already in your hand, clearly to be used as a weapon.
12. Mr Carey described seeing you enter and approach with growling sort of noises and attack him with a knife in one hand stabbing him in the upper left arm causing the wound seen in the photos produced at court for the jury and the scar that he showed the jury during his evidence.
13. Other eye witnesses, Ms Titcombe and Mr Todd, saw something of the attack, the use of the knife and the injury to Mr Carey.
14. This was a terrifying incident of deliberate violence with a knife, which could have caused a far more serious injury and possible fatality.
15. As I have said, there has never been an explanation for your actions. The only matter that was tentatively put to Mr Carey was that there had been some growing disagreement and resentment between you, Mr Cowen, and others over the use of an App to play or help with playing Countdown.
16. However, Mr Carey was at a complete loss as to why he had been singled out for this violent attack. He certainly knew of no reason why he had been targeted.
17. Because you were ruled unfit to stand trial and so there was a finding of criminal responsibility for the attack rather than a conviction, the sentencing options are limited.
18. In considering the appropriate disposal, I have been again assisted by the addendum reports of Dr Lucy Shaw and Dr Asif Mir, addressing the

ongoing medical situation in terms of diagnosis, prognosis and continuing risk.

19. Dr Shaw and Dr Mir both confirm a diagnosis of schizophrenia which is attempting to be stabilised with continuing antipsychotic treatment. Your attitude to that treatment remains hostile and so any potential treatment and monitoring in the community would not be effective as you would not engage.
20. I am dealing with an offender for an imprisonable offence and I am satisfied that, based on the written evidence of two registered medical practitioners that you, Mr Cowan, are suffering from a mental disorder of such a nature that it is appropriate for you to be detained in a hospital for medical treatment that is available to you.
21. The appropriate disposal would therefore be a hospital order under sec37 of the MHA.
22. There is further protection available to the public by the making of a restriction order under sec41 of the MHA.
23. Both doctors deem this to be necessary in their reports and Dr Shaw has given oral evidence before the court at today's hearing. She set out her reasoning for the necessity of a restriction order and answered questions from Mr Lally as to whether or not those concerns could properly be met with a stand-alone sec37 order.
24. I have considered with care those reports and Mr Lally's submissions.
25. I am satisfied that it is necessary for the protection of the public from serious harm to make such an order, given the nature of the offence, the recent troubling previous convictions, your resistance to treatment, your continuing belief that the wider world is out to get you and, as a result, the continuing risk of you committing offences.
26. The effect of these orders is that, Mr Cowan, you will remain at Guild Lodge and continue to receive appropriate treatment. Only when the Secretary of State or the Mental Health Review Tribunal deem it safe to discharge the restriction order will you become eligible for release back into the community.

27. Until that time, you will effectively be subject to a hospital order of indefinite duration.

HHJ GAD Mathieson

26th November 2025