



IN THE CROWN COURT AT MAIDSTONE

THE KING

v.

CHRISTOPHER MACLEAN

26 FEBRUARY 2026

**SENTENCING REMARKS OF
THE HON. MR JUSTICE PEPPERALL**

1. Christopher Maclean, you have pleaded guilty on this indictment to the manslaughter of Jay Gerrett. In addition, you have pleaded guilty to offences of supplying cocaine and carrying a knife in a public place without good reason or lawful authority.
2. On 2 August 2025, Jay Gerrett was on a night out in Sittingbourne. He enjoyed a number of drinks and then, unfortunately, came to meet you when he wanted to buy some cocaine. You supplied Mr Gerrett with cocaine that night through your co-defendant, Jack Hunt. When Mr Gerrett was later to complain to you and Mr Hunt that he had not been supplied with the expected quantity of cocaine, an argument ensued. The rights and wrongs of that argument do not matter. What might just have been cross words or a scuffle was, however, entirely transformed by your decision to take a knife to the scene and teach Mr Gerrett a lesson. It is, in my judgment, clear that you were angry and that you were determined to stamp out any dissent. You therefore recruited Daniel Martin to come with you as some additional muscle, and you armed yourself with a long-bladed knife. You did not arm yourself simply for defensive purposes, but in order to threaten Mr Gerrett.
3. When you met up with Mr Gerrett, you taunted him as a big man and a gangster. You pulled out your knife saying "I've got a nice surprise for you". You then repeatedly and aggressively swung that blade at Mr Gerrett.
4. Terrified for his life, Mr Gerrett ran off. Instead of regarding the incident as over, you gave chase. As he ran from you, Jay Gerrett ran down a bank. Not being a local, it may well be that he did not know that the embankment was retained by a six-foot wall which gave way directly on to the A2 below. Mr Gerrett went straight over the top of that wall and fell directly onto an oncoming vehicle. Tragically, the accident was not survivable and Mr Gerrett was declared dead at the scene.
5. Among many other injuries, a 4.5cm cut was found on post mortem examination to the centre of Mr Gerrett's forehead. That cut was only 3mm deep and did not penetrate the full thickness of Mr Gerrett's skin. The Home Office Pathologist

reported in her full post mortem report that this injury had clean edges and no visible skin bridges. She concluded that it was not possible to be certain whether the injury represented a sharp force injury inflicted by a bladed weapon or a blunt force laceration sustained as part of the fall. The injury would not of itself have caused unconsciousness or contributed to causing Mr Gerrett's death.

6. Had the pathologist given evidence at trial, it would no doubt have been put to her that in her two-page preliminary report she had recorded that no sharp force injuries were present. Plainly the post mortem evidence could not of itself establish whether the cut to the forehead was caused in the assault or by Mr Gerrett's subsequent fall on to the road into the path of an oncoming vehicle.
7. That was not, however, the only evidence about this injury since as the terrified Mr Gerrett ran away from you, an eye witness noticed a cut to his forehead. Accordingly, there was other evidence that established that such injury had been sustained before Mr Gerrett fell to his death. I am therefore sure that as you swung that knife in Mr Gerrett's face – as is clearly shown on the CCTV footage in this case – you struck a glancing blow to his forehead. I accept, however, that at no point did you stab the knife into Mr Gerrett's body.
8. On arrest, your first instinct was to lie and claim that you had been at home that evening. Indeed, you pleaded not guilty to all three offences at the plea and trial preparation hearing in October 2025. At a further hearing on 5 December 2025, you changed your pleas to guilty in respect of the counts charging you with the supply of cocaine and having the knife in a public place, but maintained that you were not responsible for Mr Gerrett's death. Although you then pleaded guilty to the drugs offence, you did so on the basis that you had only supplied drugs to Mr Gerrett. That position was not accepted by the prosecution and Mr Robinson KC accepts on your behalf that you were plainly dealing in drugs more generally.
9. Your trial on the charge of murder was due to start on Tuesday. It was only then that you accepted for the first time that you had been responsible for Mr Gerrett's death and pleaded guilty to the offence of manslaughter. That was always an obvious alternative charge to this indictment and, had you been prepared to accept your responsibility for Mr Gerrett's death at any earlier hearing, I am quite satisfied that this case would never have had to be listed for trial.
10. You plead guilty to unlawful act manslaughter on the basis that you threatened Mr Gerrett with a knife but that your only intention was to scare him. By your guilty plea, you accept that your actions in threatening Mr Gerrett with that knife carried a risk of some harm, and that Mr Gerrett's fall into the road arose from his desperate attempt to escape from you. You now accept that but for your actions, Mr Gerrett would be alive today.

11. Jay Gerrett was 32 when he died. It would have been his 33rd birthday tomorrow, but instead of gathering in celebration, his grieving family and friends are instead drawn to this courtroom as you, the man responsible for his death, is sentenced.
12. Victim personal statements were read to the court from Jay's mother, Joanne Grundy; his former partners, Lauren Cogan and Samantha Coburn, Ms Coburn speaking on her own behalf and on behalf of her and Mr Gerrett's young daughters; and his aunts, Mollie Grundy and Lisa Aylott. In addition, Mr Gerrett's brother, Reece Grundy, bravely read his own statement to the court.
13. It is clear from their moving tributes that Jay Gerrett was a family man. He was a much-loved son, father, brother, grandson, uncle, nephew, cousin and boyfriend. He was a happy man with a personality and a cheeky grin that lit up a room. A young man with a passion and real talent for football; indeed, he was good enough at the sport to have played for Tottenham Hotspurs in his youth. He was a man who brought much joy and happiness to those fortunate enough to know him in life. Jay's sudden, violent and senseless death has deeply affected those who loved him, and has left a huge hole in so many lives. He is very much missed, but is remembered with love and affection.
14. You are now 43 and have a long list of previous convictions going back to your teenage years. You have many convictions for offences of burglary, theft, robbery, and assault. You were variously dealt with by community sentences and short custodial sentences both as a juvenile and later as an adult. Twenty years ago in this court, you were sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment for the attempted robbery of a post office committed with an imitation firearm. In 2012, you were sentenced to a total sentence of 6 years and 2 months' imprisonment for possession of a sawn-off shotgun and for possession of ammunition which you were prohibited from holding because of your previous offending, a further offence of burglary and an offence of handling stolen goods.
15. I mention three other violent offences. At the age of 19, you were sentenced to 15 months' detention for an assault in which you used your fists, feet and a rounders bat to cause actual bodily harm. In 2016, you were sentenced to 44 weeks' imprisonment for an assault on a girlfriend in which you struck her with a baseball bat and then threatened her with further violence as she reported the assault to police officers. Most recently, you were sentenced in 2024 to a total term of 13 months' imprisonment for a further assault, two offences of battery, and a drugs offence. Again, this was violence towards a woman who you grabbed by the throat and punched, and at whom you threw an object.
16. You have previous convictions for possession of both cannabis and cocaine, but no previous convictions related to the supply of drugs.

17. I turn to the guidelines issued by the Sentencing Council. I have considered the offence-specific guidelines for unlawful act manslaughter, supply of controlled drugs and carrying a bladed article. Further, I have considered the generic guidelines for totality and guilty pleas.
18. In my judgment, the offence of manslaughter was a high culpability offence in that death was caused in the course of escaping from a serious offence in which you were the prime mover. You did not use the knife defensively, rather you deliberately sought out Mr Gerrett and intended to teach him a lesson. You used that weapon to cause Mr Gerrett to fear for his life and you gave chase as he sought to escape from you. While you did not use the knife to stab Mr Gerrett, you recklessly swung it straight in front of him and thereby inflicted a glancing blow to his head. Although the circumstances of this case are unusual, I do not accept Mr Robinson's submission that it fell towards the bottom of a category B case.
19. The guidelines provide a starting point of 12 years' imprisonment for this offence and a category range of 8 to 16 years. From that starting point, I must then consider the aggravating and mitigating features of your case. There are, in my judgment, three aggravating features of this case:
 - a) First, your offending was aggravated by your previous convictions and, in particular, your previous convictions for robbery, assault and battery, and for firearms offences.
 - b) Secondly, your offence was aggravated by the fact that it was committed with a knife. While the knife has never been recovered, it plainly had a long blade and was a highly dangerous weapon.
 - c) Thirdly, I consider that this offence was aggravated by the fact that you unlawfully killed Mr Gerrett in the course of threatening someone who had bought Class A drugs from you. This was, accordingly, the threat of very serious violence with a deadly weapon to enforce your illegal drug dealing business. In order, however, to avoid double-counting I leave this third matter out of account at this stage.
20. By way of mitigation, I take into account the fact that this was not a premeditated offence. Rather, you reacted spontaneously and violently when your authority was challenged. No real personal mitigation is advanced although I have been shown some certificates indicating your progress in custody.
21. Taken in isolation, I consider that the appropriate sentence after trial for the offence of manslaughter would have been 15 years' imprisonment. In accordance with the guidelines issued by the Sentencing Council, your late guilty plea to this

offence on the day of your trial should be reflected in credit of 10% against that sentence.

22. I turn then to the drugs offence. This was street dealing and therefore a category 3 offence in which you played a significant role within the guidelines issued by the Sentencing Council. The starting point for such an offence would be 4½ years' imprisonment with a category range of 3½ to 7 years. While all of your offending was aggravated by your previous convictions, it is right to record that this is your first conviction for being involved in the supply of drugs. After trial, the sentence for the drug dealing on this indictment would have been 5 years' imprisonment. You are entitled to 20% credit for your guilty plea and, accordingly, the appropriate sentence for supplying drugs is 4 years' imprisonment.
23. The offence of having a bladed article in a public place was a category 1A offence within the guidelines issued by the Sentencing Council. Accordingly, the starting point is 1½ years' imprisonment with a category range of 1 to 2½ years' imprisonment. Again, your offending was aggravated by the nature of this weapon and your previous convictions and particularly by your convictions for violent offences committed with weapons and your firearms convictions. In my judgment, the appropriate sentence after trial would have been 2½ years' imprisonment and, after credit for your guilty plea, is 2 years' imprisonment.
24. Following the careful stepped approach in the manslaughter guideline, it is then necessary to consider the dangerousness provisions in the Sentencing Code. I expressly asked defence counsel on Tuesday whether a pre-sentence report was sought. The purpose of such a report in a case of this seriousness would obviously have been to consider the issue of dangerousness. No report was sought and since I also considered that no report was necessary in this case, I did not adjourn the case for reports.
25. In considering the issue of dangerousness, I take into account your previous convictions and the facts of these offences. In your favour, I take into account that the most serious offences involving firearms were committed many years ago and that the last time that you appeared before the court for having used a weapon to inflict injury was now nearly ten years ago.
26. Nevertheless, your willingness to carry and use weapons and your previous possession of a sawn-off shotgun and ammunition taken together with the facts of this case in which you drew a substantial knife in order to settle an argument lead me to the clear conclusion that you are dangerous in that you pose a significant risk of serious harm to members of the public by the commission of further specified offences. Given, however, that you did not use your knife to stab

your victim, I do not consider that the seriousness of these offences is such as to justify a sentence of life imprisonment pursuant to s.285 of the Act. Furthermore, I conclude that the length of sentence that I must now pass is such that it is not necessary to pass an extended sentence of imprisonment. Accordingly, I shall pass a determinate sentence.

27. Having identified the individual sentences, it is necessary to consider the principle of totality and to ensure that the final sentence properly reflects your overall offending. I intend to pass a sentence for the lead offence of manslaughter that reflects your total criminality on this indictment and to pass concurrent sentences on the other counts. Your conviction on count 2 reflects the fact that you were the man carrying the knife. Such criminality is entirely subsumed in the central fact of the manslaughter offence. Your offending was, however, aggravated by the fact that the offence of manslaughter was committed against the criminal background of your supply of cocaine. Having left that matter out of account in determining the appropriate sentence for the offence of manslaughter, some further adjustment is necessary in order to pass a sentence that properly reflects the totality of your criminal conduct. In my judgment, the appropriate determinate sentence in your case is 16 years' imprisonment.

28. I therefore sentence you to 16 years' imprisonment for the offence of manslaughter, 4 years' imprisonment for supplying controlled drugs of Class A, and 2 years' imprisonment for the offence of having a bladed article in a public place. Those sentences will run concurrently making a total sentence of 16 years' imprisonment. You will serve two-thirds of that sentence before you are eligible for release on licence.

29. Further, I direct that the drugs found upon you be forfeited and destroyed, and that you will pay the appropriate statutory surcharge. You may go down.