

Rex

-v-

Robert Easom

Sentence

Robert Easom please remain seated until I tell you to stand.

Let me deal with ancillary matters first.

If the victim surcharge applies the order should be drawn up in the correct amount.

I make a Restraining Order as sought which will remain in force until further order. It is unusual to make an order without limit of time but I am satisfied that, in the unusual circumstances of this case, it is necessary and proportionate to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those protected by the order.

You were convicted by the jury of the offence of causing grievous bodily harm with intent to Trudi Burgess (Count 3 on the indictment at B4).

You are also to be sentenced on Counts 1 and 2 for two assaults occasioning actual bodily harm on the same victim. You pleaded guilty to those counts on the day of trial. However, they had only been added at a late stage on 20th October. In the circumstances I will afford somewhat more than the conventional 10% credit which would apply for pleas entered at trial. You will receive 15% credit for those pleas.

However, Count 5 (controlling or coercive behaviour) had been added in June of 2025. You will receive credit of only 10% for that plea. There can be no

credit for the offence of causing grievous bodily harm with intent of which you were convicted by the jury.

All of these offences arise out of a relationship between you and Trudi Burges. Sadly, her husband had died in November 2016. You and she became known to each subsequently through your working for her sister and brother-in-law. A relationship followed which was, for the first 18 months, a happy one. However thereafter, a cycle developed whereby you would become verbally or physically abusive, then make it up to her and the relationship would carry on.

When angry, which you frequently were, you would be verbally abusive. You had real difficulties in her being a teacher and derided her work on the basis that it was somehow not as valuable as yours. You would call her a “fucking cuntish bitch”, and “a fucking teacher bitch”. You would make cruel references to her late husband remarking – I bet you gave him a brain tumour bitch - you won't give me one.” If she accidentally dropped something you would swear at her and mock her.

By your admission to controlling and coercive you accept that you would engage in assaults. You would grab her, push her. You would deliberately scare her and then mock her for being frightened of you. You told her you enjoyed her being frightened. One minute you would mock and belittle her and the next treat her kindly. When she tried to leave you, you would claim that she was overreacting to the extent she would be persuaded that she was somehow in the wrong. You succeeded in separating her from her family such that she was isolated and under your control.

I will not set out more detail of the coercive and controlling behaviour save to that it involved violence, bullying and humiliation over a period of time. You in addition you managed to separate her from her family leaving her more vulnerable still. It is the hallmark of a sophisticated abuser to intersperse violence and cruelty with false kindness and care. Your behaviour was so

extreme and confusing that you, as you intended, led this intelligent and articulate woman to doubt what she experienced. We see her thought processes in the apple notes which she wrote to herself. It is a chilling insight into your manipulation and control of her.

The two assaults to which you pleaded guilty were particularly serious. Count 1 concerns an incident in an Air BnB when, after an argument, you launched an unprovoked and deliberate attack on Miss Burgess when she was on the bed. You wrapped her head in a green bed sheet so that she was unable to breathe. The next day she was still suffering from a sore throat.

Count 2 occurred in January 2025. You have been out for dinner with friends. On the way home Ms Burgess complained that they could not host friends at Mr Easom's house as they had insufficient cutlery and crockery. It was a feature of your controlling behaviour that, whilst you made it clear that you resented her maintaining her own property, you would not let her buy anything for your property so that it might be a home to her. As a result of her comment you lost your temper and drove at excessive speeds, frightening Ms Burgess, before bringing the car to a sharp stop. You then headbutted her and dragged your stubble down her face, causing grazing injuries to her face. She fled the car on foot to get away from him.

All of this was the background to the circumstances of the brutal and life changing assault to which you subjected her on 17th February 2025. She had been staying at your house and had slept in your spare room. You were due to go to work. The relationship had become such that she had resolved to end it. You took her a cup of tea and she said that because of how the relationship was, she no longer wanted to be there. You, as was your habit, turned it back on her. You accused her of always making things difficult. At one point you put your fist to her face such that she feared assault. She begged you not to hurt her. As a result of this bullying she backed down and said that she would stay. However, you were already in a rage. You went back downstairs and raged on. Because of your behaviour she felt she could not leave. You then came back up the stairs and pulled her down the bed towards the foot of the

bed where you stood. She was kneeling. You then placed your hands on her head and pushed down with all your strength. You shouting over and over again at her to “fucking shut up” and that you would “fucking shut her up”. She described at trial with immense courage what happened:

“He got both hands onto the top of the head and he started to push down and I was trying to scream and suddenly I could not scream and I have never felt a force like. He pushed my head down and down and I could not say stop. I tried to say you are killing me and he kept holding and he kept pushing and normally by now he would have stopped in an incident like this. He would not have gone on and he kept pushing and I felt my head was being folded into my body my head completely into my chest and I felt it crack and I felt all feeling going out of my body. I thought I am dying he is not stopping and he was shouting ‘I will shut you up, shut up - I will fucking shut you up’ and he was pushing like a monster.”

That image of her head being folded into her body was one to which she returned again and again in her evidence. It is plain from the jury’s verdict and the evidence in the case that you fully appreciated that, given the unnatural position into which you were forcing her head by applying more pressure, you intended to cause really serious harm. Indeed I am sure that you must have intended to cause serious neck injury – which is exactly what you did.

What you had done was to cause her as put in the medical evidence a “severe anterolisthesis of C6/C7 with complete bilateral facet fracture dislocation”

The medical evidence states that there was:

“gross subluxation with displacement of the mid- cervical spine at the C6/7 level. This is associated with fractures. There has been a total disruption of the anterior and posterior longitudinal ligaments.”

The agreed expert evidence at trial is that this injury required:

“very substantial hyperflexion force”.

We were told that it is the sort of injury one would expect if a person fell from height.

Despite a lengthy operation Ms Burgess has been left with permanent paralysis from the chest downwards. Whilst she has some use in her arms, she cannot move her hands. She cannot feed herself. She cannot dress or look after herself. She lives in a specialist care home with round the clock care. There is no prospect of improvement. I will return to the devastating effects of the injury you caused in moment.

In the aftermath of the incident itself you were concerned only with yourself. You initially told the 999 operator that she had fallen from her bed. Once that call was over and you were waiting for the ambulance to arrive, she told you that this story would not stand up to scrutiny. You bemoaned the fact that, should you tell the truth, you would go to prison, lose contact with your sons and lose your business. Against that background and at a point of ultimate vulnerability, she agreed with you to say that the injury had been caused during affectionate play fighting. However, once at hospital and able to contemplate her true situation and removed from your malevolent influence she bravely resolved to tell the truth.

In the following days, when you were asked by Ms Burgess' sister and brother-in-law to provide an account of what happened, you repeated the lie. That conversation was recorded and I have heard it. When you were challenged with the opinion of the medics that the injury was not consistent with your account you forcefully demanded to know if they were calling you a liar. Of course you were a liar but even when caught out you persisted in that lie. When they told you in that same conversation that she was breathing with the assistance of a ventilator you even suggested that the medics had done her some harm. They had not. All they had done was to try to repair the grievous harm you had done.

When you were interviewed later that week you handed in a prepared statement in which you suggested that you cared for her saying you could never intentionally harm her. Of course, in addition to causing her these devastating injuries you knew that you had already controlled her and assaulted her causing her injury on two previous occasions. In the interview itself you answered few questions but still stuck to the ludicrous account that you had caused these injuries in a play fight. At trial you did not give evidence.

Victim Personal Statements

Ms Burgess, her daughter and son and other friends and family have attended court today. I have heard the victim personal statements which they she and her children have prepared and read out to me. They are amongst the most upsetting statements a court could hear.

Ms Burgess' statement is carefully set out - dividing the effects of your attack on her into a number of headings.

The first covers the physical effects. She sets out the immediate consequences of your attack on her. After an 11-hour operation in which skilled surgeons tried to repair the damage you had caused, she was left for 10 weeks unable to breathe without a ventilator. She could not eat. She could not speak. She says she felt "helpless and terrified".

Then she was moved to a spinal rehabilitation unit. She is permanently paralysed in all four limbs. She has some control over her arms but none over her hands. She cannot attend to her own most basic needs and functions. She suffers with bed sores. She cannot cough or clear her throat without help. She is at risk of choking. Though paralysed she is not without sensation. On the contrary she has constant pain in her hands, feet and chest. She describes a sensation that her skin is stuck to blocks of ice. There is a burning sensation across her back. Around her trunk she feels as though she is wearing a suit of armour which is two sizes too small. Her blood pressure will

sometimes become dangerously low or dangerously high when her pain creates a hypertensive crisis.

That is only one heading of harm in her statement. The next is emotional impact. She has depression, anxiety and symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder. She suffers flashbacks of your attack on her. She grieves the life she has lost. She loved to sing – for pleasure but also professionally. She cannot sing. She was someone who liked to look her best. She can no longer look after her appearance. She has to leave that to others.

The third heading is the emotional impact upon her family. This aspect of harm is also attested to by the victim personal statements from her children. Her whole family has been traumatised. Her mother cannot come to terms with what has happened – frankly, which parent could. When you attacked her she had been living with her daughter, daughter's partner and three-year-old granddaughter who cannot understand where her beloved grandmother has gone. Ms Burgess' children who should have been enjoying the support of a loving mother and grandmother have been left grieving her injuries and travelling to see her in a residential care setting. The impact upon them is profound.

She then describes the social impact. She used to be an active person with a normal social life. She cannot drive. Getting anywhere, including to court today, is a complex operation involving many people and careful planning. She feels cut off from normal human contact.

The financial impact is profound. When you did this to her, she had just started up a new business following her retirement from teaching. This exciting project is over. She has lost her financial independence. The financial stress is piled on top of the other unbearable stresses of this already extreme situation. For her there is no insurance payout. She will have to sell her home.

She then describes the loss of her quality of life. I can put it no better than she did:

“I am left living a life I didn’t chose and would not wish on anyone. This isn’t just a physical injury, it is the destruction of a life”.

No sentence I can pass could begin to equal to the harm you have caused. I must pass the sentence which I consider to be just and lawful. But the fact remains that, even with the lengthy sentence I will impose, you will have a prospect of a future which have denied to your victim.

Dangerousness

I am required to consider whether there is a significant risk of you causing serious harm by the commission of further specified offences.

You are 57. You have one previous conviction for causing grievous bodily harm in 1990 when you were 21 for which you were fined by the Clitheroe Magistrates’ Court.

You did not give evidence at your trial. The account you gave to the police was that this horrific injury was caused during what you described as play fighting. That was plainly false – indeed during the trial it was not put forward as a possible mechanism for the injury and must have been false given your plea to the lesser offence. To the author of the pre-sentence-report (“PSR”) you have chosen to give an equally fanciful and dishonest account which is quite different to the one you gave to the police. It is perhaps the measure of your refusal to accept responsibility that you deny to the author of the PSR being guilty of controlling or coercive behaviour even though you pleaded guilty to that very offence. The author of the PSR describes your account as evasive. I go further. It is just dishonest. Your inability to accept even that which you admitted makes you more dangerous. You are not capable of change until you accept that you need to change.

I take into account your sense of entitlement. On your account to the author of the PSR, that day Ms Burgess said she would not be at your house to make your evening meal. That irritated you. As the author of the PSR points out, you failed to see that she had a life of her own to lead separate from you.

I must place this incident in the context of the other offences of violence, coercion and control within the relationship.

The author of the PSR notes that using a particular tool to assess your risk of reconviction, the risk is assessed as being low. The author of the PSR does not agree with that assessment. The author of the PSR assesses the risk of you causing serious harm as very high to intimate partners particularly while you do not accept any responsibility. You are said to be at medium risk of serious harm to members of your family.

I am satisfied that you are at significant risk of causing serious harm by the commission of the further offences. This is not a case where a life sentence is called for. However, I am satisfied that an extended determinate sentence required to protect the public. Given the length of sentence I am about to impose you could not be released until two thirds through your sentence even if a determinate sentence were imposed. However, public protection requires the additional protection of the review of your release by the parole board and an extended licence. Once released you may form another relationship. That will be a highly dangerous situation. Extended oversight is necessary.

Guidelines

Turning to the guidelines, Count 1 (assault occasioning actual bodily harm) is at A2 with a starting point ("SP") of 18 months and a range of 36 weeks to 2 ½ years' custody.

Count 2 (assault occasioning actual bodily harm) is at B2. You head butted her. That gives a SP of 36 weeks and a range of between HLCO and 18 months' custody.

I agree with the Crown that the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour at Count 5 is at category A1 with a SP of 2 ½ years and a range of 1 to 4 years. I disagree with the written submission of your counsel that this was not persistent conduct. It was. It falls into higher culpability as persistent conduct and conduct intended to humiliate.

The causing grievous bodily harm with intent at Count 3 is Culpability A for two reasons. Ms Burgess was obviously particularly vulnerable due to the circumstance of having been controlled, bullied and assaulted over a period of time. She was trapped in your house in bed in her bedclothes. Furthermore, you applied extreme force to her neck. You say that this does not amount to asphyxiation, suffocation or strangulation. I do not agree. You bent her neck so hard that it broke. She could not speak as you did it. If there is a difference it is one without any substance. To draw a distinction would be wholly artificial.

The offence is at category 1 harm. I make this finding even though that category is reserved for harm which is particularly grave within really serious injuries. Indeed, I go further. Here the harm is high even within that highest bracket.

The SP for that bracket is 12 years' imprisonment with a range of 10 to 16 years not, as your counsel contends, a SP of 5 years. The sentence for this Count must be moved to the top of the bracket to take account of there being two factors placing it in Culpability A and the severity of the injury even within its bracket. I will impose concurrent sentences on the other matters. This is to avoid double counting - especially because I take into account you having rendered Ms Burgess particularly vulnerably by your commission of the other counts. However, there must also be a modest increase in the sentence for count 3 to mark the fact that it will carry the sentence for all offending – tempered of course for totality.

I turn to aggravating features. Your previous conviction does not aggravate your sentence but you are not strictly a man of good character. These offences were committed in a domestic setting.

I note what is said in mitigation. You have also known the heartbreak of a relative suffering serious injury – your son suffered serious paralysing injury in

an accident. I have read the references put forward on your behalf and the letter you yourself have handed in. You have worked hard during your life.

Stand up Robert Easom

The sentence after trial for **count 1** would have been 20 months. With credit of 15% that gives a sentence of 17 months.

The sentence of **count 2** would have been 40 weeks. With credit of 15% that gives a sentence of 34 weeks.

The sentence after trial on **count 5** would have been 3 years. With 10% credit that gives a sentence of 32 months.

The sentence on count 3 for inflicting grievous bodily harm with intent is an extended sentence of 20 years total duration comprising a 16-year custodial element and an extended sentence of 4 years.

All sentences will run concurrently.

The extended sentence is made up of two parts: a custodial period, which will be no longer than the sixteen-year period I mentioned, and an extended licence period of four years, making an extended sentence of 20 years' duration in total.

You will serve two-thirds of the custodial period in prison before the Parole Board will consider whether it is safe to release you, and if so on what terms.

Once released, you will serve on licence any part of the custodial period which remains, and you will then be subject to an extended licence for a further period of four years, making 20 years in all.

If, when you are subject to licence, you commit another offence or fail to comply with the terms of your release, you are liable to be recalled to custody and may serve the entire sentence in custody.

The days which you have spent on remand in custody will automatically count towards the custodial term of your sentence.

Please go with the dock officer.

HHJ Altham

27th February 2026