IN THE CROWN COURT AT NEWCASTLE

REX

v.

ANTHONY RUSSELL

Sentencing remarks

1. Anthony Russell, on 24th November 2026, you pleaded guilty to the murder of Ian Huntley.

2. You must now be sentenced for that offence. I have already said that you must pay the statutory surcharge.

3. You attacked Ian Huntley on 26th February 2026. He died on 7th March. He was aged 52. You are now aged 44. You were both prisoners at HMP Frankland. You struck him at least 6 times to the head with a heavy metal bar and inflicted unsurvivable head injuries.

4. Ian Huntley was serving a whole life term of imprisonment for the murders of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman in 2002. You were serving a whole life term of imprisonment for 3 offences of murder and one offence of rape. AnthThose offences took place in October 2020 and the details have been outlined by the prosecution this morning.

5. In the year or so before this murder, there had evidently been some tension between you and Ian Huntley. Tension between such dangerous men is hardly surprising and I am sure that you were able to give at least as good as you got, as you were to demonstrate on 26th February.

The background of antagonism between you is not a factor that could reduce your sentence in the particular circumstances here, although it is the reason why you committed this offence.

6. In March 2025, there was an argument between the two of you which was witnessed by prison staff. You threatened each other and had to be separated. You were both spoken to later by prison staff and agreed that that was the end of the matter.

7. 10 months or so later, you were seen with a black eye which you have said since was caused by a punch from Ian Huntley. At the time, you said it was caused by a fall.

8. Otherwise, you told the police when you were interviewed that he had been getting really arrogant and cocky towards you and that the way he talked and his arrogance were just eating away at you. Plainly, you thought you were owed more respect.

9. You told the police that you had had enough of this. You decided that he was not going to get away with such behaviour. You said you appreciated that if you took action against him, you would lose your status as an enhanced prisoner, so you said you were determined to do it properly. I am sure, as you accept, that you intended to kill him for 3 or 4 weeks before you actually did so. All you had to do was wait for an opportunity.

10. That opportunity arose when you were both working in the recycling workshop on 26th February. You were on cleaning duties. He was

working with a compacting device. You told the police that you picked up the metal bar and were going to hit him. But he turned round and so you hid the bar. You were obviously sufficiently in control of yourself to be able to wait for the best moment. You began sweeping the floor next to the bar. You said that you were ready to pick your moment. He was wrapping some clingfilm round some items and you described that as the perfect opportunity. You described caving his head in about 6 or 7 times with a metal bar. When a member of staff got over to where you were, you stopped what you were doing. Although you were delivering what you intended to be a fatal attack, you were in control of yourself and able to stop when you wanted to.

11. I have been provided with a number of psychiatric reports about you. It is accepted that as a result of incidents in your childhood, you have a diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I am sure that that was not a factor in what happened. I am sure that you were not experiencing significant symptoms at the time of your attack or in the days before it. I am sure that Ian Huntley did nothing to annoy you or wind you up on 26th February. I am sure you made up a suggestion when you subsequently spoke to psychiatrists that he had shoulder-barged you and grinned at you. You said nothing about that nearer the time.

12. As you will know, the only sentence for murder is a sentence of life imprisonment. Paragraph 2(1) of Schedule 21 to the Sentencing Act 2020 provides that where the seriousness of an offence is exceptionally high and the offender was over the age of 21, the appropriate starting

point when considering how long you should serve is a whole life order. A case that would normally fall into this category is a case where the offender has previously been convicted of murder. You have been convicted of three offences of murder and of raping one of the victims before you murdered her. You are already the subject of a whole life order for those crimes. You also have a long record of previous convictions for other offences.

13. This offence is aggravated by the fact that it was premeditated and by your use of a heavy piece of metal as a weapon. Your thinking specifically included reference, as you said, to the fact that you were never going to be coming out of prison; all that could happen was that you would lose your enhanced status, and to be worth that, you would have to kill your fellow prisoner. You then murdered him.

14. The only mitigating factor is to be found in your plea of guilty. That has come about because you now accept, after the jury has been sworn and the case opened, that the account you gave at the time of these events was the truthful one and not the account you gave later to the psychiatrists. You had previously pleaded guilty to manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility. Now that that has been abandoned, it means that this was pre-meditated murder by a man who had murdered 3 times before.

15. In all these circumstances, I am entirely satisfied that the case is one of exceptionally high seriousness and that there is nothing to

displace the starting point. Indeed, Mr Smith KC, who appears for you, accepts that that is the case.

16. Anthony Russell, for the murder of Ian Huntley, the sentence is one of imprisonment for life. I make a whole life order. You will never be released and never eligible to apply to the parole board for release.

Mr Justice Hilliard

24 November 2026