



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

R v ROLAND PETER WRIGHT

AMERSHAM CROWN COURT

6 FEBRUARY 2014

SENTENCING REMARKS OF HER HONOUR JUDGE CUTTS QC

1. During the years 1959-1970, the time period of your offending, you were employed as a school master and then headmaster of Caldicott preparatory school. You began employment in 1952 and from 1968 remained headmaster until your retirement in 1993. You were described in one of the character references I heard in the course of the trial as an outstanding headmaster. I readily accept that you dedicated your life to this school.

2. The boys at this school were aged from as young as 6 to 13 years. Many of them were boarders throughout. By the time they were in their final year all were boarding. It is manifestly obvious that these boys were vulnerable. During term time they were cared for exclusively at the school. Their parents entrusted their welfare to the school at this time. It was your responsibility, together with the rest of the staff, to ensure they were living in a safe and secure environment. Great trust was placed in you. Yet you abused that trust. Far from protecting and nurturing the boys you used them at a whim – to satisfy what you wanted from them regardless of the impact on them.

3. You were a comparatively young man in your 30s when these offences took place. You taught French and also coached sport, predominantly rugby. It is clear that you were looked up to and admired by the boys.

4. I heard evidence that you were an inspirational teacher, both of French and of rugby. You were clearly charismatic and charming to boys and parents alike. You possessed the talent to interest the boys and could have been a force only to the good in their lives. In the course of the trial I heard witness after witness, complainant after complainant, speak of their gratitude for the way that you taught them and the positive way in which your teaching has influenced their lives. There can be no dispute that many boys who went to Caldicott have gone on to achieve great things.

5. But regrettably that was not the whole story. There was a darker side to your tuition of these boys. You fostered an environment whereby those good at sport were the elite in the school. Boys craved your attention and strove for your praise. From those you picked out boys for your individual sexual attentions. They were invited to your room, often with others, to watch TV (one of only 2 in the school at that time). They described this as almost a touch of home in an otherwise austere environment; some were invited to go on holiday

with you to watch the rugby 7s tournament in the Scottish borders or to fish, these holidays at your own expense; on occasion you gave them alcohol. For such attention there was a price. When you exacted that sexual price boys did as they were told. Some felt confused, some felt flattered by the attention, many felt it was just what happened to get Mr Wright's attention. The boys you chose were all aged primarily 11, 12 or 13 years.

6. At the material time you were accommodated within the school. Within a short time of your employment at Caldicott you were living in a bedsit room next to the senior boys' dormitory. Reference was repeatedly made during the course of the trial to a plan showing the geography of the school and the location of that room. It is plain that a master was placed in amongst these dormitories in order to supervise the boys and ensure that all was well. That was your responsibility. In fact you used the proximity of the room to the dormitories and the distance of that area from the rest of the school to set up your own little fiefdom and used it to abuse boys.

7. I heard evidence in the course of the trial that on more than one occasion you went with Mr Henry into the senior boy's dormitory after lights out and when you had clearly both been drinking alcohol. There is no evidence that you yourself abused a boy when there with Henry but I am satisfied on the evidence that you were there on one occasion when Henry did so. I am also satisfied that you went to the dormitory with Henry on occasion with at least the intention of so doing.

8. For many years those you abused kept their silence. No doubt you believed and hoped that they always would. During your trial I heard the reasons for that:

a. Boys felt they could never tell parents who had thought they were doing right by their sons in sending them to the school, many of such parents admired you;

b. Some felt a sense of guilt as they looked back at their young selves and in some way felt complicit in what had happened;

c. Some felt fear and embarrassment of what would happen if they spoke about it.

It is sadly all too frequent that those who are abused in childhood consider in adulthood that because they failed to say something and did as they were told they are in some way responsible for what happened. I wish to make it absolutely clear that no man should feel guilt or consider he was complicit in any way. All were children in the care of an adult who had little but his own sexual gratification in mind.

9. The offences began to come to light in 2001. A 2 year police investigation followed. I heard about that investigation during the course of your trial. It is clear to me that the police fear of being accused of trawling for evidence prevented the proper investigation of this case at that time.

a. You were then charged with offences against 5 boys. No trial took place at that time as a judge stayed the indictment for abuse of process. Following that stay a further 5 men made allegations against you. I am to sentence you today for the offences against those 5

later complainants. The stay meant that the jury were not called upon to return a verdict in the case of the 1st 5 complainants. Notwithstanding that fact and knowing of it each of them came to give evidence in the course of the trial. I commend their selflessness and their courage in so doing.

b. Their evidence clearly showed the jury how you operated at the school in grooming and sexually assaulting children. Their evidence was an important part of the trial. I make it clear that I sentence you today only for the offences of which you have been convicted but I wish to make it equally clear to them that I believed every word of their evidence.

10. The result of the delay is that you are now a man aged 83. You are not in the best of health. You suffer from a number of conditions which cause you pain. I witnessed that in the course of the trial. I recognise that you need assistance with day to day care. I must take that into account and I do.

11. I also take into account that you no longer pose a risk to children. I take into account the positive aspects of your life and of you as a teacher following this offending.

However these factors can provide only limited mitigation. I cannot ignore the impact of your behaviour on so many boys. It is clear from the impact statements that I have read that your conduct has had a lasting effect upon them. I do not propose to read aloud any of those statements now. The victims of your offending can be sure I have read them all. Your offending, albeit so many years ago, has affected them throughout those years. It has affected the confidence of some and the ability of others to form lasting and intimate relationships. I witnessed a successful man now in his 60s in tears when giving evidence of what you did to him.

12. You have never admitted your guilt. You were convicted after a trial of 12 offences against 5 complainants. As the first jury could not reach verdicts on the majority of the charges you faced the witnesses had to give evidence twice.

13. Your offending spanned the years 1959-1970. I am satisfied on the evidence that I heard that it came to an end shortly after and as a result of you becoming headmaster at the school. You moved out of the room by the dormitories into a cottage and got married. It seems your new role, marital status and residence brought these offences to an end.

14. I turn to the offences for which you are to be sentenced.

a. Counts 1 and 2

i. Between 1959 and 1960 you went into the senior boys dorm as they were getting ready for bed. On several occasions you asked the boy named in those counts, then in his last year at school so aged 12-13, to join you in his room. He did so some 5 or 10 minutes later. He was able to watch TV there, something he considered a great privilege.

ii. Between 3-6 times you put his hand on your erect penis and caused him to masturbate you to ejaculation. Once that happened you sent him back to the dormitory.

iii. Counts 1 and 2 relate to the times that you would masturbate him. He could not remember if he was then capable of erection or ejaculation.

b. Counts 3-7

i. Counts 3-7 all concern the same boy. He was one of the sporting elite who was invited into your room with others to watch TV. He was given whiskey by you on some of those occasions.

ii. Long after he was asleep in his dormitory in his penultimate year (aged 11-12) you would come and wake him telling him to come to your room. When he did so various sexual activity took place:

- You masturbated him to ejaculation (cts 3 and 5)
- You caused him to masturbate you to ejaculation (Cts 4 and 7)
- You would also lie behind this boy and rub your erect penis between his thighs, simulating intercourse until you ejaculated. (Ct 6)
- This conduct happened on numerous occasions and at least once with one other boy in the bed.

c. Count 8

i. This boy, one of the sporting elite, would in his last year be told to come to your room in the mornings whilst you were still in bed. He stood by your bed at his instigation and on at least 10 occasions you held his penis under his shorts. He would have been aged 12-13 at this time.

d. Counts 9 -11

i. The boy involved in counts 9-11, one of the sporting elite, had been invited to go on a fishing holiday with you. His parents entrusted you with his care. Under the guise of speaking about the next day's itinerary you invited him into your room and masturbated him to ejaculation. (Count 9).

ii. Thereafter once back at the school once a week he would be asked to take you tea in bed. You put your hand into his shorts and masturbated him to ejaculation. (count 10)

iii. When you moved he was invited to come to your cottage. There on one occasion you were in bed with this boy and another. You caused him to masturbate you to ejaculation and did the same to him. Were other occasions you abused him at the cottage.

iv. This boy was aged 12-13 when this offending occurred.

e. Count 12

i. This boy, in the sporting elite, was invited many times to your cottage. There you masturbated him to ejaculation. This boy did not always leave the school on exeat weekends. At times he would stay with you in the cottage. He was aged 12-13 at the time.

15. These offences are so serious that notwithstanding your age and all I have heard about you it is beyond question that only a custodial sentence can be justified.

16. I have regard to the sentencing guidelines for offending of this nature. These offences have been charged under the Sexual Offences Act 1956. I have applied the guideline by reference to the nature of the activity involved as it would be charged under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. In my view for counts 3-7 (where the boy was under the age of 13 at the time) the applicable guideline is that relating to an offence under Section 7 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. For all other counts it is that relating to an offence under Section 9 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as the boy concerned may have been over the age of 13 at the material time. Given your prolonged behaviour and the context of it there is little difference in my view in whether the boy concerned was 12 or 13 years.

17. I bear in mind that the maximum sentence for counts 4 and 7 is 2 years imprisonment and for all other counts 10 years imprisonment. The maximum sentence for offences under S7 and S9 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 is 14 years imprisonment. I have adjusted the sentences accordingly. However it must be remembered that the starting points and range of sentences are designed for a single offence involving the activity in question. I am to sentence you for multiple offending against each of these victims.

18. The aggravating features of these offences are significant. With all boys this was prolonged activity, the boys were groomed by a master at a school responsible for their care. Some boys were awoken at night and told to come from their beds to your room. You caused many of them to ejaculate and to masturbate you to ejaculation. You were offending between 1959 and 1970. It is difficult to think of a more serious breach of trust.

19. In reaching the appropriate sentence in this case I have looked at the entirety of your offending against these boys. I keep in mind the totality of your sentence.

20. Looking at the entirety of your offending the least sentence I can impose is one of 8 years imprisonment. The sentences are made up in the following way:

a. On counts 1,2,9,10 and 12 – 6 years imprisonment.

b. On counts 3,5 and 11 – 7 years imprisonment.

c. On counts 4 and 7 – 2 years imprisonment.

d. On count 6 – 8 years imprisonment.

e. On count 8 – 4 ½ years imprisonment.

21. All to run concurrently with each other. You will serve half of that sentence in custody whereupon you will be released on licence. If would be recalled to serve the rest of that term should you commit any further offence.

22. You will be on the sex offenders register for life and included on the list held by the safeguarding authority of those banned from working with children.

23. I would like to publicly commend DC Alexander and DI Banfield for their tireless work on this investigation which has, since their involvement, been a model of its kind.