



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

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-v-

MARK BRIDGER

MOLD CROWN COURT

30 MAY 2013

SENTENCING REMARKS OF MR JUSTICE GRIFFITH WILLIAMS

The sentence for murder is Life Imprisonment but I have to decide the length of the minimum term you must serve.

Schedule 21 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 provides that if the court considers the seriousness of the offence is exceptionally high, the appropriate starting point should be a whole life order and that the cases which would normally fall within that category include the murder of a child which involves the abduction of the child or sexual or sadistic motivation. While I am satisfied that the seriousness of your offending is exceptionally high, I must nonetheless consider whether a substantial minimum term, in excess of a starting point of 30 years, would be sufficient to reflect the gravity of these offences.

For the last four weeks, the court has listened to compelling evidence of your guilt, evidence which has also demonstrated that you are a pathological and glib liar. There is no doubt in my mind that you are a paedophile who has for some time harboured sexual and morbid fantasies about young girls, storing on your laptop not only images of pre-pubescent and pubescent girls, but foul pornography of the gross sexual abuse of young children.

What prompted you on Monday 1st October to live out one of those fantasies is a matter for speculation but it may have been the combination of the ending of one sexual relationship and your drinking. Whatever, you set out to find a little girl to abuse. I am not sure you targeted April specifically – it was probably fortuitous that she can be seen on some of the images, which you stored on your laptop, of her older sister – but you were on the prowl for a young girl.

April would not have been afraid of you partly because you have some charm and she may well have seen you about the estate and probably because you let her know your son was a friend of her brother (just as you had tried to charm her sister, [redacted]* into allowing you to be her Facebook friend by mentioning your links to her parents). And so it was that innocently and trustingly, April got into your land rover smiling and happy.

What followed is known only to you but this much is certain – you abducted her for a sexual purpose and then murdered her and disposed of her body to hide the evidence of your sexual abuse of her, which probably occurred on the way from the estate to your home because there is some 60 minutes of your time which cannot be accounted for.

I cannot infer from the evidence where you murdered her but if she was alive when you took her to the house, she died there.

How you disposed of her body must remain a mystery. It will serve no purpose for me to speculate as to what happened but all the indications are that you burnt at least a part of her in the wood burner.

The grief of April's parents cannot be over-stated. They lived with the torment of a missing daughter, praying that she would be found alive and then, following your arrest, with the knowledge that you were providing the police with no assistance at all as to her whereabouts. To add to that torment, they have had to endure the spectacle of your hypocritical sympathy for their loss and of your tears, flowing not because of any regret for your crimes, but because of your enduring self pity.

Without the knowledge of what happened to April, her parents will probably never come to terms with their grievous loss, described so eloquently in the Impact Statement. It is to be hoped, for their sakes, for the sakes of [redacted]* and [redacted]* and for the sakes of all those who mourn April, that the verdicts will bring some measure of closure.

Your offences were aggravated by their premeditation and by the destruction of at least a part of her body and the concealment of the rest. It is also a relevant consideration that you not only abducted April with a sexual motive but then sexually abused her in some way.

While I have had regard to the absence of any relevant conviction, I have no doubt there can be only one sentence –

For the offence of murder, I sentence you to Life Imprisonment with a whole life order. There will be no separate penalties on Counts 1 & 3.

** An order made under s39 Children and Young Person's Act 1933 prohibits the reporting of the names of April's siblings and these have been redacted from these published sentencing remarks.*