



HMA

v

John Wilson and Lisa Brown

1 September 2009

Today at the High Court in Glasgow Lord Matthews sentenced John Wilson and Lisa Brown in relation to the death of Anne Brown on the 18 October 2008 at Laigh Gree, Burnhouse, Ayrshire. John Wilson was found guilty of culpable homicide and sentenced to 12 years imprisonment. Lisa Brown was found guilty of murder and given a life sentence with a punishment part of 20 years.

On sentencing Lord Matthews made the following statement in court:

“You have both been convicted of very serious offences.

You Lisa Brown stand convicted of the murder of your own mother in particularly brutal circumstances.

You John Wilson stand convicted of the crime of culpable homicide. Quite what your role was at the house at Laigh Gree is not entirely clear from the evidence but the jury were plainly satisfied that you participated in a common criminal purpose in which violence to Anne Brown was anticipated and, of course, her death resulted from that violence.

In addition both of you have been convicted of what can only be described as a callous attempt to defeat the ends of justice, in effect by treating the deceased’s remains like so much rubbish and affording her no dignity whatsoever in death.

I have listened carefully to what has been said on your behalf and obviously I take that into account, as I do the evidence, which I heard for myself. I also take account of the letters written by you Lisa Brown to you John Wilson, not for the purpose of aggravating your culpability, Miss Brown, but in so far as they help to explain your position, Mr. Wilson.

I detected no real remorse on the part of either of you. I noted that that was a matter which proved especially galling for the deceased's brother Mr. Elliot in his comments to the media after your conviction. An explanation for that has been provided by Counsel and by Dr Douds. I accept the diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome and that does help me to understand why there is this lack of response on your part Lisa Brown. I find Mr. Wilson's lack of remorse altogether more puzzling, but in any event the very nature of the acts is what is most repellent. Mr. Elliot was also concerned at the picture painted in court of his sister's character and attributes. Of necessity Counsel have to make such use of evidence and information as they think appropriate in terms of their instructions and they acted quite properly at all times. However it would be remiss of me, I think, were I not to point out in the first place that the court had at best only a brief snapshot of the type of person the deceased was and in the second place that that brief snapshot included an image of a woman who was kind to animals and strangers and who was obviously greatly loved and is now sorely missed by her mother and brother.

The Crown accept that both of you offered to plead guilty to charge 2 at or about the time of a preliminary hearing in March, therefore a discount in the sentence I would otherwise have passed is appropriate. That charge, as Counsel recognised, has horrific overtones. It may be that the deceased was still alive when the process of trussing her up started although there is no evidence that she was showing any signs of life.

I see no reason to distinguish between you in relation to charge 2. Obviously there will be a significant distinction between you in relation to charge 1.

As far as charge 2 is concerned, had I been sentencing you for that alone, in view of the horrific nature of it, which was made plain in the evidence, I would have started at a figure of 6 years imprisonment but the indication of a plea of guilty at about the time of the preliminary hearing entitles you to a reduction in that sentence.

John Wilson, as I have said, it is not clear what exactly you did at Laigh Gree, or indeed whether you struck any blows at all, although if you administered any blows they were not lethal ones. Your account of total innocence in relation to charge 1 was obviously not accepted by the jury, at least in its entirety. From a difficult start in life and thanks to the love and support of your foster carers you carved out a useful life for yourself. You were gainfully employed, you had your own flat and in other circumstances you would never have appeared in court. Sentences for culpable homicide can range from non-custodial ones to life imprisonment. In my opinion it would be appropriate, taking account of all of the evidence, the Social Enquiry Report and the submissions of your Counsel, to impose on you a sentence in the middle range.

Your sentence will run from 3 November 2008.

It will be a total of 12 years imprisonment being made up of 7 years in respect of charge 1 and 5 years consecutively in respect of charge 2.

Lisa Brown, you plainly had a difficult relationship with your mother and you also suffer from certain problems which we heard about this morning. I have read the report on you and listened carefully to what was said by Miss McMenemy. Once again I take account of all that and of the evidence which I heard, including that of Dr Douds, whose conclusions I accept. All of the evidence makes it obvious that there was a great deal of

premeditation in what you did and the fact that your own mother was your victim is something which most people will find abhorrent. I understand why you have shown no emotion, but that does not reduce the gravity of these crimes. Of course, no sentence can bring your mother back but I have to pass on charge 1 a sentence of life imprisonment which will run from 3 November 2008 and which must include an element which will punish you for what you did and it must reflect not only the circumstances of charge 1 but also those of charge 2. You are not going to be punished twice for charge 2 because the sentence on that will be concurrent, that is it will run alongside the sentence on charge 1, but in order to punish you properly for charge 2 I have to proceed in this way.

In respect of charge 1 the punishment part, that is the period which must elapse before you can apply for parole will be 20 years. In effect, that is made up of 17 years for charge 1 and 3 years for charge 2. The sentence on charge 2 is 5 years imprisonment to run concurrently. The periods are different because I have to make allowance for the possibility of parole on charge 2 had I been sentencing you in respect of that charge alone”.

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