

Telegraph & Argus

Woman, 52, fought for her life in rape attack

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A brutal sex beast who viciously attacked a woman on Ilkley Moor has been jailed for life.

David Newton, who struck nine years after raping a terrified schoolgirl as she lay next to her brother, must stay behind bars for at least 12 years.

Sentencing father-of-five Newton, 55, at Leeds Crown Court yesterday Mr Justice McCombe said his crimes were horrific.

The judge told him: "You brutally attacked a woman, and her resistance was of such ferocity and bravery that you were driven to attempt to dispose of her with a knife, and then you dumped her, while unconscious, away from the immediate scene."

After the case, Detective Superintendent Chris Thompson, who led the investigation, said: "These were appalling and horrific attacks on two innocent victims. David Newton exerted an extreme level of control and power over both victims and he used excessive violence in carrying out his crimes."

Det Supt Thompson branded Newton an exceptionally dangerous man and said he should never be released from prison unless the authorities were satisfied he was no longer a danger.

He said he had no doubt Newton believed that when he walked off the moor that he had killed his victim.

"I believe that David Newton is pure evil and it is testament to his victims' courage that they have been able to move on with their lives," said Det Supt Thompson.

The Ilkley Moor victim said she felt enormous relief that Newton was now behind bars.

"The horror of what happened that day will never leave me but this chapter of my life is now closed and I am very positive about the future," she said.

The teenager, who was raped at the Primrose Valley beauty spot in Leeds, said she had 11 years of torture knowing her attacker was still out there. She thanked all involved in catching "this monster".

Newton pleaded guilty in October to the attempted murder and attempted rape of a 52-year-old woman walking her dogs near the Panorama Reservoir on Ilkley Moor in June 2006. He also admitted raping a 16-year-old girl and the false imprisonment of her 11-year-old brother in July 1997.

But on the day he was to be sentenced he said he no longer wanted to plead guilty.

Mr Justice McCombe was told yesterday that only that morning Newton had again changed his mind and wanted the guilty pleas to stand.

Prosecutor Michelle Colborne said Newton's crimes were sexual attacks against lone or vulnerable victims in isolated Yorkshire parkland.

She said the girl and her brother had been collecting frogs at Primrose Valley.

Newton approached them, bare-chested and holding a craft knife. He ordered them to walk ahead of him along a path, holding the girl, a virgin, from behind with the knife at her throat.

He ordered the youngsters into a den, held the knife to the girl's chest, ordered her to strip and raped her as she held on to her brother to calm and soothe him.

After the attack they fled, distressed and dishevelled, to a friend's house.

A DNA profile was taken from her and a TV Crimewatch special shown across the country.

On June 26, 2006, Newton struck again at Ilkley. His victim was a 52-year-old lone woman dog-walker.

She saw Newton and, unnerved by his appearance, ran, but was caught.

Newton pointed a knife at her and pinned her to the ground. She seized the blade, which was at her throat, and fought for her life.

After the knife snapped, cutting her thumb, she lay on the weapon to conceal it from her attacker.

Miss Colborne said Newton became incensed and rained blows on her face. She screamed for help and continued to struggle, poking at his eyes and cutting his face.

He punched and then strangled her with his hands and throttled her unconscious with a ligature before pulling down her clothing and trying to have sex with her.

"In the sure belief that she was near death he dragged her body and dumped it several yards from the scene," Miss Colborne said.

She was unconscious for 25 minutes. When she came round, she gathered her clothing and fled.

Miss Colborne said that police had already been alerted by a woman who had seen the attack but not been close enough to help.

Officers met the victim on her way down the moor. She was bleeding heavily and in a state of shock. She had substantial head and facial injuries, including two black eyes, a broken nose, swelling and bruising to her head, and ligature marks to her neck.

She needed surgery to her broken nose and injured shoulder.

Samples were taken from under the woman's fingernails and a DNA profile obtained, but because Newton had no criminal convictions he could not be linked to the previous attack.

Two years later, in June this year, he was asked to provide a mouth swab. The following day Newton fled to Cornwall and checked into a bed and breakfast.

In the next couple of days he refused to look at newspapers or to eat his meals.

On June 29 his photo appeared in the national papers and he walked out of his room leaving the door open and the TV news on, having seen a report that he was "wanted and dangerous".

Newton rang police from a call box and was taken to Trafalgar House Police Station in Bradford and arrested.

Newton, who worked as a delivery driver, told police his marriage had broken down and he had turned to drink. He said his wife had had an affair. He said he was now worried about debts run up by his second wife and the police calling round for the mouth swab was "the last straw".

He denied any involvement in the attacks.

The judge heard impact statements from all three victims.

The girl, now 27, said she still suffered anxiety attacks and never walked anywhere alone. "I feel my childhood was stolen," she said.

The Ilkley Moor victim said that before the attack she was a confident, professional woman but she now refused to go on the moor alone.

She said that for a long time she feared he would come back "to finish me off".

She said she suffered nightmares and flashbacks and any images of strangulation on the television "freaked her out".

"I thought I was going to die, that I would never see my daughters again, that this was the moment of death," she said.

'Ordinary man' who turned into violent sex beast

Sex beast David Newton spent months checking websites for breakthroughs in DNA technology, as police closed the net on him.

And it was those breakthroughs, which established a scientific link to a member of his family, which led to his capture and conviction.

Newton, 55, was brought up close to the Primrose Valley beauty spot in Leeds where he attacked his first victims in 1997.

He was living in the area at the time of the rape of the schoolgirl, having split up with his wife – with whom he had five children – a year earlier. One theory is that the marriage break-up sparked the first phase of Newton's horrific crimes.

There was then a gap of nine years to his attack on the woman on Ilkley Moor. Until his arrest he was not known to police.

Detective Superintendent Chris Thompson, of West Yorkshire Police's Homicide and Major Enquiry Team, said: "He has no previous convictions and was not recorded on any systems. He is essentially a grey man with nothing exceptional about him. He is not a particularly social man. He didn't frequent pubs and would drink at home."

When he was married, Newton took his wife and children on holiday every year to The Lizard in Cornwall. It was there that he fled to when the police moved in to arrest him.

A team of experienced detectives continued to work with scientists on the original case for many years.

Within 36 hours of the Ilkley Moor attack detectives were able to link the two cases through DNA evidence.

Then, a refinement of a specialist technique, called familial DNA, provided a vital breakthrough, linking the crimes to Newton's family.

Det Supt Thompson said: "We had eliminated 1,000 people from the inquiry through familial DNA.

"If the crime scene isn't on the DNA database, scientists will look for similarities and other profiles which could lead to a familial connection. The new development made the inquiry more focused and narrowed it down from a pool of thousands of possible suspects to hundreds.

"Through this we identified a member of Newton's family on the database. We visited the male members of Newton's family, which is quite extensive.

"We went to see Newton and he co-operated with police.

"However, a short time later he left his home address and attempted to mislead the police by implying to his partner that he had gone to an East coast caravan site.

"But an Automatic Number Plate Recognition system identified his car on his way to his beloved Cornwall."

Det Supt Thompson said: "At no time throughout the police interviews, or since, has he shown any remorse whatsoever.

"We knew that Newton was aware the police inquiry was closing in on him.

"We are aware he was monitoring various scientific websites on the internet and looking very closely into developments in DNA technology in the weeks and months leading to his arrest.

"His employment as a delivery driver has allowed him to travel widely throughout the UK and we are liaising with other forces in respect of other unsolved crimes. Those inquiries are ongoing."

Forensic science that helped trap rapist

State-of-the-art forensic techniques were used to help bring David Newton to justice.

The new familial technology allowed experts to link the Ilkley Moor attack to the rape of the schoolgirl in Leeds in 1997 within 36 hours.

Cathy Turner, of the Forensic Science Service, said: "We were able to use a refinement to a specialist DNA technique to offer the most valuable intelligence to police in this investigation.

"We are pleased that this pioneering technology assisted West Yorkshire Police in bringing David Newton to justice and hope this case acts as a warning to others.

"A case that is unsolved today could be solved tomorrow thanks to the continuing leaps forward in DNA technology."

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