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Man on the Run to Avoid Prison Faces Life for Murdering Suffolk Grandmother

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— Categories: Crime



A man who had been evading a prison recall by living off-grid is set to be sentenced to life behind bars after murdering a grandmother in a violent attack during her morning dog walk in Brantham, Suffolk.

Roy Barclay, 56, was convicted of killing 57-year-old Anita Rose, who had been walking her springer spaniel, Bruce, when she was ambushed on July 24, 2024. She suffered repeated kicks, stamps, and blows. Although she was found by passers-by and taken to the hospital, she died four days later from her injuries.

Barclay had denied the charge of murder, but a jury at Ipswich Crown Court found him guilty following a trial last month. He is due to be sentenced at the same court today, with the judge already warning that a life sentence is inevitable.

After the verdict was returned, Judge Martyn Levett told the defendant: “The sentence is one that inevitably is going to be life in prison, and the length of it is going to be very lengthy.”

The court heard that Barclay had previously served time for a serious assault in 2015 and was released from prison in February 2020. He later breached his licence conditions, prompting the Probation Service to issue a recall notice. However, rather than return to custody, he disappeared.

Prosecutors revealed that Barclay had been unlawfully at large for two years and deliberately avoided detection by living in remote areas. He slept in makeshift camps and wandered the Suffolk countryside to escape being returned to prison.

Prosecuting barrister Christopher Paxton KC said: “He lived off-grid because for two years, Roy Barclay had been unlawfully at large. He had been on the run trying to avoid the police and authorities to try and avoid being recalled back to prison.”

The attack on Ms Rose drew disturbing comparisons to Barclay’s past offences. In 2015, he was convicted of grievous bodily harm with intent after attacking an 82-year-old man in Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex. That victim, Leslie Gunfield, had challenged Barclay for going through supermarket bins. Barclay responded by launching a violent assault, leaving Mr Gunfield with serious head injuries that required surgical implants.

Both cases involved similar circumstances. Jurors were told that Mr Gunfield had been found with a dog lead around his foot, while Ms Rose was discovered with a lead tightly wrapped around her leg, a detail which prosecutors said further pointed to Barclay’s violent tendencies.

After his conviction, Ms Rose’s eldest daughter, Jess, called for better protection within communities and more accountability when it comes to monitoring offenders. “Criminals cannot remain at large,” she said. “There’s too much at stake, and our communities need protecting. We need to make sure that our communities are safe and that people are monitored, that criminals are taken back to prison when they break the terms of their probation.”

Suffolk Police have stated that a review will be conducted into how information is shared between agencies, particularly relating to monitoring individuals released on licence. Barclay had no fixed address at the time of the murder, making it more difficult for authorities to keep track of his movements.