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Aged just ten and 11, the two sadistic brothers were already well known to police and social services.

So how, critics were asking last night, were they allowed to commit one of the most shocking crimes Britain has ever known.

The pair subjected two innocent children to a savage torture and beating ordeal involving bricks, lit cigarettes and a noose that left one of the victims barely alive.

Yesterday they yawned in court as the horror of their crimes unfolded - and they escaped trial for attempted murder by pleading guilty to lesser charges.

The case brought to an end a shocking three-year rampage of violence and intimidation that the brothers conducted under the noses of police and social workers.

It culminated in the sickening attack carried out in April this year, when they left a nine-year-old boy battered and bleeding and his 11-year-old companion pleading: 'Leave me, I can't see. Leave me to die.'

The horrific and protracted assault was carried out while the baby-faced culprits, who cannot be named for legal reasons, were supposedly under the care of scandal-hit Doncaster Social Services - and on the day that they should have been interviewed by police about an attack a week earlier.

The younger of the pair was on bail, his accomplice was being 'monitored' by a youth offending team after being placed on a supervision order.

#### CHARTER OF HORROR

The two attackers:

Beat up the boys with sticks and bricks

Forced them to sexually abuse each other  
Urinated on them while drinking beer  
Burnt the eyelids and ears of the nine-year-old  
Stamped on his face and genitals  
Made him eat stinging needles  
Wound a noose around the neck of the 11-year-old

The case has inevitably underlined chilling similarities with that of two-year-old James Bulger, killed in 1993 by two boys aged ten. The convicted brothers even used to watch the same Child's Play videos as Robert Thompson and Jon Venables, who were released from custody in 2001 after serving just eight years of their so-called life sentences. Last night relatives of the brothers' victims urged 'proper justice' and called for them to be locked away for life. One described what they did as 'despicable and disgusting' and called for 'a sentence to fit the crime'. The horror which unfolded on April 4 was contained in 11 charges read to a judge at Sheffield Crown Court yesterday.

Their victims had been hit with sticks and bricks after being lured to a 'desolate' spot called Brick Ponds with the promise of seeing foxes and toads near the former pit village of Edlington, near Doncaster. Once there, they were robbed of their mobile phones and £4. The elder boy had a kitchen sink dropped on his head and had 'ligature marks' around his neck.

A noose was recovered from the scene. The younger boy was burned with a cigarette on his eyelids and ear. He had a sharp stick rammed into his arm and cigarettes pushed into a gaping wound, which eventually required plastic surgery. Then, their tormentors tried to force the boys into performing sex acts on each other. As they put the boys through the two-hour ordeal, the brothers danced around them and mockingly chanted: 'We're going to prison!'

The elder victim was left unconscious, freezing cold, half naked and fighting for life at the foot of a wooded ravine.

The nine-year-old limped back to Edlington, covered from head to toe in blood and bare foot after losing a shoe. He pleaded for help from a couple who raised the alarm.

The father of the 11-year-old found his son '30 minutes from death' in the ravine. An air ambulance crew took more than an hour to stabilise him before he could be moved. Both boys recovered, but only after the older one spent two days on a ventilator. The brothers were originally charged with attempting to murder the two boys and threatening to kill a third, a choirboy attacked in similar circumstances the previous week.

But after a deal struck behind closed doors, their pleas of not guilty were accepted by the prosecution yesterday.

They admitted attempting to cause grievous bodily harm with intent to the two boys, and inciting sexual acts. They also pleaded guilty to a robbery charge. Although the GBH charges carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, it is rarely imposed. The brothers will be sentenced in six weeks.

But the main question being asked last night was how they were allowed to get away with their crimes in the first place.

With an irony that didn't escape their many victims, both boys were on the Child Protection Register of Doncaster Social Services.

The authority has already been heavily criticised over its 'inadequate' record after seven children died in its care and has been described by Children's Secretary Ed Balls as having 'serious weaknesses'.

But nothing the brothers' social workers did appears to have answered the dozens of public complaints and calls from neighbours and victims to get them off the streets.

Instead, they led a lawless existence of theft, vandalism, assault and racist intimidation against children and adults alike.

Crucially, however, the boys had been identified as suspects for the attack on the 11-year-old choirboy a week earlier.

They were due to be interviewed about it at a police station on April 4 but they did not turn up. Instead, they attacked their two new victims.

Last night the father of the 11-year-old victim said: 'We are happy with the result today. It wasn't the full thing (attempted murder charge) but it's better that the kids can put it behind them now. They're doing really well, they've made me proud.'

'A history of violence'

The two attackers are reported to have a long history of anti-social behaviour.

A cafe owner alleged the boys tried to blow up her business after she refused to give them

cigarettes.

She told the Sun how the younger boy asked her: 'Can I have a fag?'

When she refused, she said the boy rode off on his bike, shouting 'Witch, Cow, Slag'.

The pair reported returned a few days later and lit a bonfire next to the gas pipe leading into the cafe, causing £5,000 of damage before it was put out by firemen.

Joy said: 'The whole place could have gone up. These two aren't mischievous, they're just completely evil.'

The Sun also reports the boys have 40 allegations of criminal behaviour on their police record, from setting a girl's hair on fire to throwing rocks at buses in a bid to make them skid.

'Leave me, I can't see, just leave me to die'

Five months ago today, their futures looked bleak after they were savagely set upon by two feral brothers.

But, thanks to the wonders of modern medicine coupled with an extraordinary display of spirit, the two young boys left for dead by their laughing torturers have made an astonishing recovery.

Beaten to a pulp and forced to perform sex acts on each other, the innocence of a nine-year-old boy and his 11-year-old companion was shattered on a sunny Saturday last April.

The older victim was found by his father blinded, half naked and unconscious at the bottom of a ravine after a sink was smashed over his head.

Paramedics summoned an air ambulance. He was just 30 minutes from death.

In hospital, the elder boy had so many bruises that his parents were unable to hug him. He was petrified when strangers walked into the ward.

Surrounded by family and friends, their deep cuts and bruises healed quickly - although the elder boy needed plastic surgery. Incredibly, they are now back at school, bearing the scars of

the attacks.

The elder boy has a bald patch at the back of his head where the porcelain sink was dropped on him. The other has a scar that runs along the base of his chin on the right-hand side of his face.

The 11-year-old comes from a large working-class family. His mother died of cancer in her thirties when he was only one. His father went on to marry again.

The younger boy's mother is a housewife and his father works in a local shop.

Last night the elder boy's 44-year-old father insisted the attackers deliberately tried to kill the boys by tying barbed wire from one tree to another to strangle them. His testimony is a sobering one.

'He had holes all over his head,' he said. 'He was cut from his head to his feet. At first he could not see. He was blinded from where they smashed him over his head and from stamping on his face.'

'If he had been left for another half an hour, in my opinion, it would have been too late.'

During his ordeal, he begged pitifully: 'Leave me, I can't see. Leave me to die.' His father told how the 11-year-old ended up looking like something from a 'Freddy Krueger film'.

'They (the attackers) were trying to kill them. They smashed a white porcelain sink over his head. They were really trying to kill them. It was all premeditated. They set it up.'

The father fears that the degrading two-hour violent and sexual attack has left his son 'mentally scarred for life'.

He is eternally grateful, however, for the nine-year-old's actions in seeking help for the elder boy after limping back to the village on April 4.

The 11-year-old's father said: 'If it were not for him my son would be dead. If it was not for his courage and the physical strength he had left in him to get out of there - they both would have died.'

As paramedics pulled his son from the ravine, the first words he uttered were: 'I'm freezing.'

His father said: 'I was crying and shouting, "I'm going to kill them" - but all I really cared about was that the boys were safe.'

He was 'shattered' when he saw the injuries on his son, a timid boy whose main loves are football and maths puzzles.

As his father held him, medics washed away the blood and mud. However, as the skin was cleaned, they kept finding more gashes and cuts.

His father added: 'He remembers bits but there is stuff he doesn't want to remember. He was able to describe the boys to the police.'

'I told him, just give them enough to make sure those boys stay locked up.'

At first, the 11-year-old was so traumatised by the attack he cried at the sight of strangers.

Yet before the nightmare on April 4, both victims were often spotted with fishing rods under their arms, talking about Manchester United.

They preferred to be outdoors, rather than cooped up in front of a video game.

Although fears remain about the long-term psychological impact of the attack, the families of the pair were keen to mark yesterday as the start of a new chapter in their lives.

However, the desire for justice remains. Last night the families of the boys called for the judge to impose lengthy sentences after the attackers pleaded guilty.

#### Demonic doll Chucky links the horror crimes

The two tormentors convicted yesterday used to watch the same horror films as Robert Thompson and Jon Venables, the killers of James Bulger, it emerged last night.

From the age of six and seven, the Doncaster attackers were allowed to sit through Child's Play videos while their mother smoked cannabis, a relative claimed.

The central character of the horror film series is a demonic doll called Chucky, which comes to life and kills people.

The films feature scenes of graphic violence which many adults find too disturbing to watch. It was Child's Play 3 that came under scrutiny during the trial of Thompson and Venables in 1993. Venables' father, Neil, hired the 18-certificate video less than a month before James Bulger was killed.

The trial judge, Mr Justice Morland, suggested 'exposure to violent videos' may have influenced the boys' behaviour.

Child's Play 3 contains scenes in which an obsessed doll, Chucky, dies after being splattered with paint and having its face pulped.

James Bulger was splashed with paint and battered to death. It was also said that the Chucky movies had influenced the killers of 16-year-old Suzanne Capper, who was tortured and killed in 1992.