

BRAVE MUM:

‘My son was murdered in the Nottingham attacks – now I want justice’

Emma Webber’s son Barnaby was killed after a night out – now she’s fighting for change to ensure his legacy lives on

When Emma Webber dropped her son off at university in September 2022, she was excited for him to begin the next stage of his life. But following a night out at the end of his first year, Barnaby was savagely murdered in Nottingham in the early hours of 13 June 2023.

Valdo Calocane stabbed and killed Barnaby, 19, as well as fellow University of Nottingham student Grace O’Malley-Kumar, 19, and Ian Coates, 65.

Calocane, who is diagnosed as schizophrenic, was sentenced to a high-security hospital order after admitting manslaughter by diminished responsibility in January 2024.

But Emma, 53, has fought tirelessly for justice, and there is currently an ongoing statutory inquiry which will examine the systemic failures



Valdo Calocane killed Emma’s son Barnaby

of mental health and police services in Nottingham. She says, ‘Calocane should not have been on the streets – he was known to authorities prior to killing Barnaby, Grace and Ian. We can’t grieve properly until justice is served.’

THRILLED

On A-level results day in August 2022, Emma, who lives in Taunton, Somerset, remembers how thrilled she was when

‘EVIL CANNOT BE REHABILITATED’

her eldest, Barnaby, then 18, received the grades he needed to study history at the University of Nottingham. She says, ‘He had his heart set on going there. His grades were well deserved too as he’d worked so hard. He happily went off to meet his mates and, later that day, we went out to celebrate the good news as a family at a wine bar he used to work at.’

Shortly afterwards, Emma and Barnaby, alongside her husband David and youngest son Charlie, then 14, packed up the family car and made the journey to drop him off at university. Emma recalls, ‘Despite problems on the roads and momentarily getting lost, those six-and-a-half hours in the car were lovely, as we spent

the entire time chatting. Barnaby was buzzing with excitement and I was so happy for him.’

After the family put the last of Barnaby’s boxes in his new room, Emma gave him a hug before setting off back home. ‘I remember telling him how much I loved him and how much we’d miss him,’ she says.

Over the next few weeks, Emma and David took it in turns to keep in touch with Barnaby via text or phone call. ‘We didn’t want to feel like we were pestering him,’ she says. ‘But whenever we spoke to him, he regaled us with tales of how much he was loving university. He’d settled in so well, as we imagined he would. Barnaby always got on so well with everyone. He found his crowd at uni quite quickly. One night he sent us a text asking how to make fajitas, which made David and me laugh.’

FEAR

Throughout his first year, the family would regularly visit Barnaby. ‘We were so proud to see the young man he was becoming,’ Emma recalls.

Then, on 13 June 2023, Emma and David were enjoying a short stay at a holiday lodge in Cornwall when they woke to the news that a stabbing had taken place in Nottingham in the early hours.



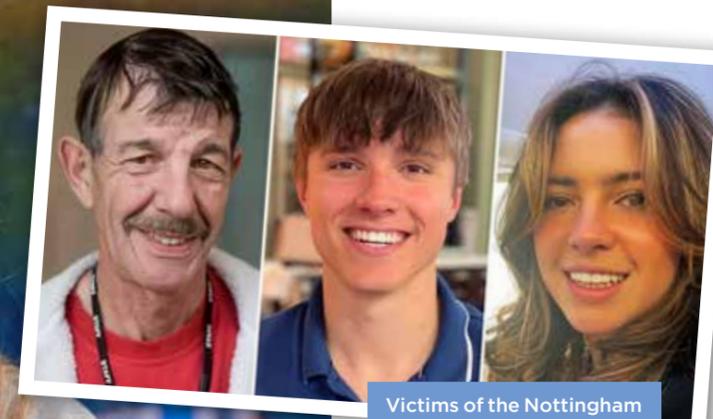
Barnaby was just 19 when he lost his life

Emma says, ‘Our hearts sank as we frantically tried to get in touch with Barnaby. We tried not to fear the worst, but we couldn’t get through to him. Panicked, we called the police who then got back in touch with us to deliver the news that changed our world – Barnaby had been stabbed to death.’

Barnaby was just 19. He lost his life, alongside fellow student Grace O’Malley-Kumar and caretaker Ian Coates. Emma says, ‘We immediately drove to Nottingham in shock. When we got there, we were met by family liaison officers. Later that week, two separate vigils took place to commemorate Barnaby, Grace, and Ian – one at the university and one in the city centre. Thousands of people showed up to pay their respects, and we were overwhelmed by the love people showed.’



Emma Webber is campaigning for change



Victims of the Nottingham attacks: Ian Coates, Barnaby Webber and Grace O’Malley-Kumar

In the following weeks, the families were told more details about what happened that morning. Barnaby and Grace had been walking home following a night out when Valdo Calocane attacked and fatally stabbed them both. He then stabbed Ian before stealing his van and trying to run people over. ‘It was a senseless, horrific attack and we were broken by grief,’ Emma says.

A month later, Barnaby’s funeral was held, and more

than 600 people turned up to pay their respects. Emma says, ‘What helped me cope was the National Grief Advisory Service. Following Barnaby’s death, they’ve provided us with support and I became a patron for them.’

VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR

In January 2024, Calocane was sentenced to a high-security hospital order after admitting manslaughter by diminished responsibility. There was no

trial, as prosecutors accepted his plea of not guilty to murder due to serious mental illness. He admitted three counts of attempted murder relating to the pedestrians he tried to target with Coates’ van.

Following his sentencing, a report revealed that Calocane had stopped taking his medication for schizophrenia, and was known for showing frequent violent behaviour. He had missed multiple

appointments with mental health teams and, just two weeks earlier, had been arrested for attacking two of his work colleagues.

Emma says, ‘We felt there had been a massive miscarriage of justice and that he should have been in prison, not in hospital. Evil cannot be rehabilitated.’

Since Barnaby’s death, the family have fought tirelessly for reform to the justice and healthcare systems, and in the coming weeks, the inquiry will begin examining what went wrong across mental health services and policing – and whether those failures could have prevented the attack.

Emma says, ‘While our hearts will always be broken, we hope to make a positive change in Barnaby’s name so his legacy will live on.’

A public inquiry into failings which led to the Nottingham attacks in 2023 began last week. The inquiry is required to provide a final report with recommendations by May 2027. On the first day of the hearing, Nottingham and Leicestershire police forces apologised to the bereaved families and survivors for failing to act on an arrest warrant for Valdo Calocane that was issued 10 months before the Nottingham attacks.

NHS England and the NHS trust that cared for Calocane also apologised to the families over missed opportunities.

● To find out more, visit barnabywebberfoundation.co.uk and for help and support go to nationalgriefadvice.com



Tributes were left in the city centre



Emma has tirelessly campaigned and met with the Government

BY DANIELLE LETT PICTURES ALAMY/PA IMAGES, SHUTTERSTOCK