

Thursday, 25 July 2019

(10.00 am)

LADY SMITH: Good morning. We return to further oral evidence in morning and I am told our first witness is ready; is that right, Mr MacAulay.

MR MacAULAY: Good morning my Lady. Yes, the first witness is ready, he is an applicant. He wants to remain anonymous and to use the name "Michael" in giving evidence.

LADY SMITH: Thank you.

"MICHAEL" (sworn)

LADY SMITH: Please sit down and make yourself comfortable.

Michael, you will see the red light is on the microphone, which means that it should help us to hear you and in particular help the stenographers hear you through the sound system, so could I ask you to make sure you stay in a good position for it, please. The red file is something Mr MacAulay will explain to you and, if you are ready, I will hand over to him now.

Mr MacAulay.

Questions from MR MacAULAY

MR MacAULAY: Good morning Michael.

A. Good morning.

Q. The red file you have in front of you contains the statement you have provided to the inquiry. I will give

- 1 the reference for the stenographers: WIT.001.002.4957.
- 2 Michael, if I could ask you to turn to the last page of
- 3 the statement. That is the very last page.
- 4 A. Very good.
- 5 Q. Can you confirm you have signed the statement?
- 6 A. Yes, I have.
- 7 Q. And do you say in the last paragraph, paragraph 60:
- 8 "I have no objection to my witness statement being
- 9 published as part of the evidence to the inquiry"?
- 10 Is that correct?
- 11 A. That's correct.
- 12 Q. Do you go on to say:
- 13 "I believe the facts stated in this witness
- 14 statement are true"?
- 15 A. Yes, I do.
- 16 Q. If we go back to the beginning of the statement, then
- 17 Michael -- can I say that you have that hard copy in
- 18 front of you but the statement, as we are going through
- 19 it, will also appear on the screen and you can refer to
- 20 whichever is comfortable for you.
- 21 I don't require your date of birth but can you
- 22 confirm the year of your birth is 1966?
- 23 A. That is correct.
- 24 Q. And you are now about 52 or thereabouts?
- 25 A. That is correct, yes.

- 1 Q. In the first part of your statement you give us some  
2 background in connection with your family and in  
3 particular that your father was in the army, and that  
4 that --
- 5 A. Air force.
- 6 Q. In the air force?
- 7 A. Yes.
- 8 Q. Ah that meant that you spent time abroad as a child?
- 9 A. That is correct.
- 10 Q. I think you have three brothers; is that right?
- 11 A. Three elder brothers, that's right.
- 12 Q. And I think you say that, at least initially, education  
13 was at RAF schools; is that right?
- 14 A. Service schools, yes.
- 15 Q. But there came a point in time when the decision was  
16 made that you would come to Scotland for your education;  
17 is that right?
- 18 A. That's correct, yes.
- 19 Q. Were your parents still abroad which that decision was  
20 arrived at?
- 21 A. Yes, they had a sort of bolthole in the Highlands near  
22 to Forres, a small cottage there, so they were sometimes  
23 abroad, sometimes back in Scotland, that is correct.
- 24 Q. I think originally the decision might have been that you  
25 would go to Carlekemp Priory School, North Berwick.

- 1 A. That was the intention, but then Carlekemp closed and  
2 I went to Fort Augustus.
- 3 Q. I think you suggested in your statement that that might  
4 have been around the age of 10, which would take us to  
5 about 1976, but I think we know that Carlekemp closed in  
6 1977, so is it more likely you went to Fort Augustus in  
7 1977?
- 8 A. You are correct, yes. I think I am a year out there.
- 9 Q. When you went to Fort Augustus, did any of your siblings  
10 go with you?
- 11 A. My elder brother [REDACTED] went -- he joined Fort Augustus at  
12 the same time.
- 13 Q. And would that be the beginning of the academic year in  
14 1977?
- 15 A. That is correct, in September.
- 16 Q. As we just touched upon, Carlekemp closed at about that  
17 time. Did that have an impact, as far as you could see,  
18 on the population of children at Fort Augustus?
- 19 A. Yes, it did. I wasn't aware of how Fort Augustus  
20 operated previously, but it seemed -- obviously the age  
21 range dropped down to around about -- 8 or 9, I think,  
22 was the starting age and, you know, went right up to 17.
- 23 Q. Did you understand that was because the Priory School  
24 had closed and therefore the boys who might have gone to  
25 the Priory School came to Fort Augustus directly?

- 1 A. Yes, that is correct, that was the case.
- 2 Q. Just looking at aspects of the set-up at Fort Augustus,  
3 there were different houses within the school.
- 4 A. Yes.
- 5 Q. And in your day I think you tell us there were three  
6 houses: Calder, Vaughan and Lovat; is that right?
- 7 A. Yes, Calder was the junior house, and Vaughan and Lovat  
8 were the two senior houses.
- 9 Q. So when you went there in 1977 at the age of about 11  
10 which house did you go into?
- 11 A. Calder house.
- 12 Q. As far as sleeping arrangements were concerned at that  
13 time at least, what were they like?
- 14 A. Okay. It was a little bit chaotic to begin with. On my  
15 arrival we were accommodated in a small house which was  
16 at the front drive called The Lodge, in bunk beds sort  
17 of crammed in to a small dormitory, and within a couple  
18 of weeks we were moved up to the main school into  
19 a larger dormitory, but you shared -- in the larger  
20 school, you shared cubicles, and bunk beds.
- 21 Q. I think it is the case that you stayed at the school  
22 until your sixth year?
- 23 A. That is correct, yes.
- 24 Q. So would that take us up to about 1984?
- 25 A. Yes, the summer of 1984 was when I left school.

1 Q. [REDACTED]

2 A. [REDACTED]

3 Q. [REDACTED]

4 A. [REDACTED]

5 Q. Can I just ask you about the staff, and I am focusing on  
6 the monks first of all. Can you tell me the names of  
7 any particular staff members that you can remember were  
8 involved in the school during your time?

9 A. That is pretty extensive. [REDACTED] was  
10 Father [REDACTED] MMF . The housemasters when  
11 I arrived were Father [REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED] MFG  
12 [REDACTED] MFG and [REDACTED] MFC was the junior housemaster.

13 In terms of monks who taught in the school, Father  
14 [REDACTED] MFA taught [REDACTED] in the junior school; he  
15 had just arrived from Carlekemp. Father Augustine Prior  
16 taught French and ... Father [REDACTED] MEZ taught [REDACTED]  
17 [REDACTED]

18 Q. Did the monks change over the period that you were there  
19 or was that fairly constant?

20 A. It was pretty constant. I think it was death that  
21 caused any movement in that -- and I would say that the  
22 one change that happened sort of halfway through my time  
23 was the death of [REDACTED] MFG which meant  
24 a sort of fairly big shift in the map of who controlled  
25 or who did what.

1 Q. You mentioned Father [REDACTED] MFA did he come in  
2 a particular position in the pecking order as far as you  
3 could work out?

4 A. On arrival there he had come from Carlekemp and he was  
5 simply a priest, a monk and a teacher. He had no  
6 position other than I believe he had held a sort of  
7 housemaster's position in Carlekemp.

8 Q. But did that change then over the period?

9 A. That changed, particularly after the death of  
10 [REDACTED] MFG I think [REDACTED] MFC I might  
11 be mistaken, I think he went to [REDACTED] as well during  
12 that time. But [REDACTED] MFA ended up as a junior  
13 housemaster and then a Vaughan housemaster.

14 Q. I think that was something that concerned you  
15 latterly --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. -- who was in that position, particularly when you were

18 [REDACTED]

19 A. Sure.

20 Q. -- and something came to your attention.

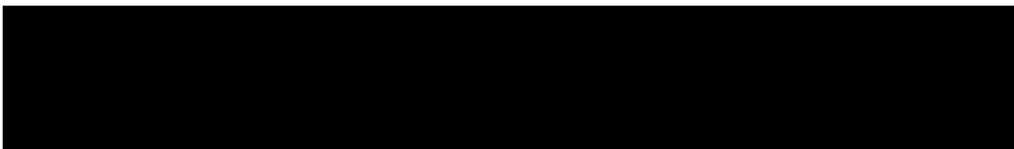
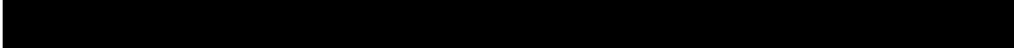
21 A. Sure.

22 Q. We will look at that in a moment. You already mentioned  
23 the dormitories and the set-up at the beginning. As you  
24 got older and worked your way through the school, [REDACTED]

25 [REDACTED] did the sleeping

- 1 arrangements change?
- 2 A. Yes, they did. Life got better and you enjoyed a bit  
3 more space. I think in fourth year you might get  
4 a single cubicle, and then in fifth year you had  
5 a shared study in the west wing of the school, and then  
6 sixth form you had your own study.
- 7 Q. And as [REDACTED] did you have any further accommodation  
8 or was that just --
- 9 A. Yes, I had a study in the west wing, yes.
- 10 Q. Insofar as the routine was concerned, I think what you  
11 tell us in your statement was that at bedtime the  
12 prefects were involved in that process.
- 13 A. Very much so. The prefects did a lot of the day-to-day  
14 running of the school, and so they were largely  
15 responsible for putting the boys down to sleep at night  
16 and for getting them out of bed in the morning.
- 17 Q. And how many prefects would there be on an annual basis?
- 18 A. There were school prefects, a head boy and, I think I'm  
19 right in saying, two school prefects per house, so that  
20 was a hard core of five prefects and house prefects  
21 beyond that who had slightly lesser responsibilities,  
22 but still sort of put the boys to bed and got them up.  
23 So all in, I think around about seven or eight prefects.
- 24 Q. These would be sixth formers?
- 25 A. Correct.



- 1 Q. Insofar as discipline would be concerned, did the  
2 prefects have a role to play in connection with the  
3 discipline?
- 4 A. Yes, they did. They would take disciplinary action  
5 for -- for example talking in studies, the prefects  
6 supervised prep. They would award discipline for  
7 someone having their hands in their pockets, their top  
8 button not being done up, and someone might expect to  
9 get bin duties as a result of that.
- 10 Q. What do you mean by "bin duties"?
- 11 A. Bin duties is going around -- I think it was two or  
12 three times a week -- and emptying the bins in any one  
13 room. So you might have the history room and the maths  
14 room, and you had to empty the bin in the main bin  
15 downstairs. Those sorts of really small sort of minor  
16 punishments. For anything larger you would send the boy  
17 to his housemaster.
- 18 Q. Did that remain the procedure throughout your whole  
19 period at the school?
- 20 A. That remained the procedure, yes.
- 21 Q. 
- 22
- 23 A. 
- 24 Q. -- would you be involved in that process directly?
- 25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Would you yourself, for example, [REDACTED] be in  
2 a position to tell a boy who is misbehaving or had his  
3 hand in his pockets to go and empty bins and so on?

4 A. Sure. He would get a punishment and he would be put on  
5 a roster for emptying bins, yes.

6 Q. In relation to aspects of the routine, again just  
7 focusing on aspects of that, as far as washing and  
8 bathing is concerned, I think you tell us in particular  
9 about having showers after you had done sport.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Was there any supervision of the showers?

12 A. Not that I recall. Not certainly from any of the  
13 teachers or the housemasters. There may be either  
14 a prefect or a housemaster coming through the area if  
15 some of the pupils were late for something else.

16 Q. I think the showering arrangement was a communal one; is  
17 that right?

18 A. That is correct.

19 Q. So far as leisure was concerned, I understand that sport  
20 was quite an important aspect of the school.

21 A. Yes, it was. I think we did sports four or five times  
22 a week. It certainly came to form part of the pecking  
23 order within the school society, and I think it was our  
24 only outlet from our academic studies. We did not have  
25 a home life and so sports was the only sort of

1           opportunity you had to get away from that, and perhaps  
2           go to other schools and play sports against them.

3       Q.   In relation to home life did you yourself go home for  
4           the school holidays?

5       A.   I went home for the half terms and the school holidays,  
6           yes.

7       Q.   For that purpose was home abroad or was it in Forres?

8       A.   My parents had moved to Aberdeenshire by that stage,  
9           yes.

10      Q.   You have told us about the monks and their roles; were  
11         there also lay teaching staff at the time?

12      A.   Yes, there was.

13      Q.   Generally speaking, how did you find the lay teachers?

14      A.   The lay teachers I -- I think, looking back, were  
15         perhaps more inclined to being more balanced and  
16         considered than the monks were.

17      Q.   How did you find schooling in general over the period  
18         that you were there?

19      A.   I went there for 11 to 17. I just did not question what  
20         was put in front of me, and accepted everything as it  
21         was as perfectly normal. I would say, looking back now,  
22         I think it was a bit chaotic, a bit disordered. I think  
23         perhaps the monks stamped their own ideology on to us  
24         and rather than sort of looking to our futures, they  
25         imposed their aspirations on us.

- 1 Q. Can you just elaborate on that?
- 2 A. Yes. To give you an example, I remember specifically
- 3 Father [REDACTED] MMF [REDACTED] referring to an incident at
- 4 a conference of [REDACTED] where he had been asked what
- 5 they prepared the boys at the Abbey for, and he
- 6 answered, "Well, we prepare them for death", which, you
- 7 know, is a wee bit extreme. He meant that in the
- 8 context of being a Catholic and someone who had faith
- 9 but it wasn't the best practical leadership for us.
- 10 Q. One thing you do say at paragraph 20 -- it's on the
- 11 screen -- that you noticed when you got to the school
- 12 was how deferential the boys were to the priests.
- 13 A. Sure. Yes, I will qualify that. I had spent the first
- 14 four years of my life in Germany at a service school
- 15 where the majority of the -- and along with service
- 16 families, where the majority of the families and
- 17 children were English. I then went to Gibraltar, to the
- 18 naval school there, and the same sort of attitudes were
- 19 very much prevalent.
- 20 When I went to the Abbey, I found there was a sort
- 21 of ... the guys could be really pretty rough and
- 22 streetwise, but when a priest came in, their head
- 23 dropped, literally. That was what surprised me.
- 24 I remember, you know, someone would drop their head
- 25 and punctuate their sentences with "Father": "Yes,

- 1 Father", "Aye, Father", "No, Father". That was very  
2 different to anything I had encountered.
- 3 Q. Did you do the same then when ...?
- 4 A. No I don't think I did, no.
- 5 Q. Can I just focus on some of the monks that you  
6 encountered. You tell us, from paragraph 31 onwards,  
7 about Father [REDACTED] MFA [REDACTED] who we have already touched  
8 upon.
- 9 A. Yes.
- 10 Q. One of the things you say is that he had a reputation  
11 for being a bit too "touchy-feely".
- 12 A. Correct.
- 13 Q. Can you just tell me about that?
- 14 A. So that might mean if a child was in bed sick, it would  
15 be joked, "Here comes [REDACTED] MFA [REDACTED] with the Vicks", or he was  
16 always a bit too tactile.
- 17 Q. And as far as the Vicks -- I think you mean the Vicks  
18 cream --
- 19 A. That's right.
- 20 Q. -- that you can use, would he do something with it?
- 21 A. That went on your chest. He would sort of, as  
22 I understand it, come around and sort of apply it, even  
23 though he was just a [REDACTED] teacher.
- 24 Q. Was there somebody else who was in charge of the --
- 25 A. Effectively --

- 1 Q. -- infirmary?
- 2 A. Sure. There was a matron who by rights should have had  
3 complete control of that but because Father MFA had  
4 allegedly been to medical school at Glasgow University,  
5 he sort of assumed some position of authority there in  
6 that regard. Also looking back he -- you know, he was  
7 sort of hoodwinking the system, but everyone believed  
8 him.
- 9 Q. When you say "hoodwinking the system", what do you mean  
10 by that?
- 11 A. Well, you know, he was using his sort of position as  
12 a [REDACTED] teacher and as a purported medical expert,  
13 I believe, to go and, you know, touch young boys.
- 14 Q. Did you yourself experience this?
- 15 A. I did at the age of 14/15, yes.
- 16 Q. What happened?
- 17 A. By that stage I was playing rugby and training pretty  
18 hard as a 15-year-old, and I had had a sort of leg  
19 injury, and I got haemorrhoids as a result of that, as  
20 well, of the limping, and the matron gave me haemorrhoid  
21 cream, and it was very obvious because I was limping  
22 quite badly. Father MFA who by that stage was my  
23 housemaster, invited me in to sort of give me massages  
24 and rub this cream in.
- 25 Q. And when you say "invited me in", into where?

1 A. Into his office, yes. I think that happened about two  
2 or three times. He would rub cream in.

3 Q. What exactly happened? What did he do?

4 A. He would have me take my trousers down, and he would rub  
5 cream, haemorrhoid cream, over my backside.

6 Q. You say this happened on how many occasions?

7 A. It happened I think two or three times.

8 LADY SMITH: How old were you then?

9 A. I was 14 or 15, I don't remember exactly, but by that  
10 stage [REDACTED] MFG [REDACTED] had died and [REDACTED] MFA [REDACTED]  
11 had taken over as the Vaughan housemaster.

12 LADY SMITH: At that age weren't you old enough to apply  
13 your own cream?

14 A. Yes, but, you know, at 14/15 you have this very  
15 compassionate monk who is saying he is going to help you  
16 and you are in this environment with lads where you  
17 believe -- and within a very short space of time it  
18 clicked that, ah, this was not right, yes.

19 MR MacAULAY: But when he began this process of applying  
20 cream, what did you think of it?

21 A. I frankly thought this was someone doing me a favour,  
22 trying to help me.

23 Q. But when you say it clicked, when did it click that  
24 there was perhaps more to it?

25 A. So it clicked when I was in his office and

- 1           MMF           came in and pretty much walked out  
2           straightaway -- you know, he excused himself and left.
- 3           Q.   Did he see what was going on?
- 4           A.   Yes he.
- 5           Q.   What was going on at that point?
- 6           A.   What was going on -- I had my trousers down and MFA  
7           was massaging my backside.
- 8           Q.   Did MMF           ever speak to you about it?
- 9           A.   The following day I was approached by a Father MPE  
10          and I was asked some searching questions and it was at  
11          that point -- to answer Lady Smith, it was at that point  
12          I thought, right, this was wrong, and MMF           knows  
13          about this and MFA           was up to his antics.
- 14          Q.   What sort of questions was Father MPE           asking?
- 15          A.   I don't remember but they were roundabout questions  
16          about Father MFA           about you know how it was going with  
17          him or ... and, you know, I answered moderately but  
18          I didn't sort of open up to Father MPE           than sort of,  
19          "Oh, he has been rubbing cream on my backside, what do  
20          you think?" I said, "Everything is fine with  
21          Father MFA           and, you know, that was it.
- 22          Q.   I think you say that is when you realised that there was  
23          perhaps more to it than simply --
- 24          A.   Straightaway. It all fell into place then.
- 25          Q.   I think you tell us about another incident involving



1           Father [REDACTED] MFA [REDACTED] perhaps at a time when he was  
2           perhaps a little bit under the weather with drink. Can  
3           you tell us about that?

4           A. He was under the weather -- that was pretty frequent.  
5           I believe he was an alcoholic. He had a very ruddy  
6           complexion, he had white hair but a very red face and he  
7           would often get extremely intoxicated and just be  
8           completely inappropriate. One of my friends at school  
9           at the time went into the [REDACTED] and he spoke to  
10          him saying -- inviting him into the [REDACTED] He  
11          would often give boys cigarettes, which is completely  
12          inappropriate, but on this particular occasion he said  
13          to my friend, "I am just like you, I have got two balls  
14          and a cock", and my friend told me about this, and then  
15          subsequent to that I went in and I got the same spiel  
16          followed by Father [REDACTED] MFA [REDACTED] taking my hand and trying to  
17          guide it towards his penis, you know, on top of his  
18          habit.

19          Q. What did you do?

20          A. I pushed him away and walked out.

21          Q. Was there another incident that may have involved

22          Father [REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED]

23          A. So this was third-hand -- is this involving Father [REDACTED] MFA [REDACTED]  
24          or ...

25          Q. Yes, in connection with Father [REDACTED] MFA [REDACTED]

1 A. In connection with Father MFA So I recall as well  
2 another pupil in the school who had been incurring  
3 difficulties. He had been dropped down a year just  
4 because of poor academic performance. And one of  
5 the teachers had had an explosive outburst with this  
6 particular pupil. He was sent to his housemaster,  
7 Father MFA and MFA said, "Look, we will make  
8 all this good if you just, you know, satisfy me", and  
9 basically invited him to -- got him to masturbate him.  
10 That is what I heard, hearsay, at the time and that  
11 MRQ had walked into the during  
12 that.

13 Q. Do you know what happened?

14 A. I think MRQ walked out again and the incident ended,  
15 you know, quickly.

16 Q. Did you have very much to do with Father MRQ

17 A. Not a great deal, no.

18 Q. You do tell us about one incident where you were  
19 punished by him for something that you did.

20 A. That is correct.

21 Q. What age were you at that time?

22 A. I was 11 or 12, it was my first year at the school, so  
23 my first year in Calder house under MFC  
24 It was the summer term, so I had been at the school,  
25 I guess, for eight months or so. There was an

1 [REDACTED] and a couple of us were -- there was  
2 a bit of horseplay, we were throwing one of our friends  
3 into [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] MRQ was there watching. There  
4 was no problem with this until the point where the guy  
5 that was being thrown in banged his head, unfortunately,  
6 on the side of the [REDACTED] At which point Father [REDACTED] MRQ  
7 exploded, and sent all three of us up to his office to  
8 wait for the cane. We got dressed, and we got four of  
9 the cane each.

10 Q. Separately? Do I take it by that I mean were you in --

11 A. You stood outside his office and you went in one at  
12 a time.

13 Q. But there you were punished for putting another boy at  
14 some sort of risk by his head hitting [REDACTED]

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. I think you say in your statement, Michael, that that  
17 may have been the first caning you got having been at  
18 Fort Augustus.

19 A. Correct, because Father [REDACTED] MFC only  
20 administered the belt. I had had the belt before, you  
21 know, and I certainly wasn't an angel. But I never  
22 knew, neither before that particular incident nor after,  
23 any other incident where a housemaster belted or caned  
24 someone outwith his own house.

25 Q. Perhaps that takes me on to discipline generally. Can

1           you just help me with that. How was discipline managed  
2           at that level then, at the level of the monks? If monks  
3           had to administer punishment for misdemeanours, what  
4           happened generally?

5           A. So you would be sent to your housemaster by a prefect,  
6           and that might range from talking during study time,  
7           during prep, or it might mean being sent down from the  
8           dormitory if you were running around pillow-fighting or  
9           play-fighting or even talking in the dormitory, and the  
10          housemaster would decide then and there how that would  
11          be punished. Sometimes that would be the strap on the  
12          hand, or in the senior houses it was -- could be the  
13          cane.

14          Q. Did that happen to you?

15          A. Sure.

16          Q. What housemasters are we talking about?

17          A. So with **MFC** I would get strapped, I guess,  
18          a couple of times a term at least. Under

19          **MFG** I could be caned three or four  
20          times a term.

21          Q. So far as the cane was concerned, was that over your  
22          clothing?

23          A. It was over your clothing, yes.

24          Q. What about the  did he --

25          A. Never, never. He never administered punishment in that

1 way, no.

2 Q. So far as you are concerned in relation to  
3 the punishments that you received, were these  
4 punishments administered because you had committed some  
5 offence --

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. -- whatever that offence might have been?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Over your years at Fort Augustus, how did that develop,  
10 let's say, when you got older into the fourth, fifth and  
11 sixth years, for example? The punishments -- were you  
12 punished in that way, for example, in sixth year?

13 A. In sixth year, no, absolutely not. In fifth year, less  
14 so. You tended to get into the realms of, you know,  
15 proper disciplinary procedures. People, you know, could  
16 be looking at expulsion or being put on a warning or  
17 something similar. I don't remember getting caned when  
18 we were in the fifth year. It was more sort of reserved  
19 for those periods when you were growing up.

20 Q. Did you witness at any time any boy that had suffered  
21 injuries because of being caned?

22 A. I don't recall so, no.

23 Q. You also tell us about an incident -- and this is going  
24 back to Father [REDACTED] MFA -- when you were [REDACTED]  
25 [REDACTED] n sixth year --

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. -- and another boy drew something to your attention in  
3 connection with Father [REDACTED] MFA Can you help me with  
4 that?
- 5 A. Yes, so given my history with [REDACTED] MFA and the fact  
6 that he was a housemaster at this stage --
- 7 Q. But he wasn't your housemaster at this stage?
- 8 A. I was [REDACTED] so he was, but I was sort of beyond his  
9 remit; I guess I reported in to the headmaster more.
- 10 Q. So on this occasion someone then drew your attention to  
11 something?
- 12 A. On this occasion my attention was drawn to a couple of  
13 junior boys running around and shouting things about  
14 [REDACTED] MFA if you will allow me to call him that, the name  
15 that he was known by. [REDACTED] MFA had porn mags in his  
16 [REDACTED] and they were running around laughing,  
17 shouting about this, and I -- I asked them to explain  
18 themselves and I got to the bottom of the fact that they  
19 had been -- three of them or four of them had been  
20 rooting around the [REDACTED] looking for the [REDACTED]  
21 exam paper -- there were exams in a week or couple of  
22 weeks --
- 23 Q. So they were wanting to look at the exam paper in  
24 advance?
- 25 A. They were trying to find the exam paper to get the

1 questions and instead they found gay bondage magazines,  
2 quite a surprise.

3 Q. Did you see these magazines?

4 A. I did not see the magazines. They had not taken them,  
5 they had seen them, and I said, "Right, disappear, not  
6 another word, I am going to follow this up".

7 Subsequently I saw [REDACTED]  
8 Father [REDACTED] MMF [REDACTED] in the corridor and I spoke to  
9 him, and said -- I explained the situation and that  
10 I wanted to discuss this with him, that these gay  
11 bondage magazines had been seen by these juniors. He  
12 said to leave it with him and I was to speak to him  
13 about it the next day.

14 I was subsequently invited to [REDACTED]  
15 office in the hospice, which, I don't know if you know,  
16 is some way into the monetary, and it wasn't often  
17 that I went there. So I went to the hospice, sat down  
18 in his office, and he explained to me that he had spoken  
19 to Father [REDACTED] MFA [REDACTED] and the explanation I was given was that  
20 this had been received as part of a random mailing  
21 system.

22 Q. So what was your reaction to that?

23 A. My reaction was one of incredulity. I didn't accept  
24 this, but I didn't -- nor was I in a position really  
25 to -- I was two months away from leaving the school at

1 that stage -- nor was I in a position really to assert  
2 this to [REDACTED] so I guess I sort of rolled my  
3 eyes. I was annoyed about this and I made that clear to  
4 a number of friends at the time, and left it at that.  
5 But I have always had difficulty with that inaction on  
6 [REDACTED] MMF [REDACTED] part.

7 Q. Why was that?

8 A. Because [REDACTED] MMF [REDACTED] knew what [REDACTED] MFA [REDACTED] tendencies were  
9 and, you know, if I have a grievance, it is with him  
10 failing to act and leaving him in place as a housemaster  
11 in the school.

12 Q. And was he the housemaster for a range of boys including  
13 younger boys?

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. Were you concerned about that?

16 A. Of course, naturally.

17 Q. Did Father [REDACTED] MMF [REDACTED] say anything else? Was that the end  
18 of the conversation?

19 A. I don't think Father [REDACTED] MMF [REDACTED] could say anything. He  
20 was a 30-something academic priest. His love in life,  
21 I think, was going off to the Vatican and studying  
22 Classics and Latin. I don't think he really wanted to  
23 be there, and he wasn't going to have the fight with the  
24 Abbot over someone he -- he had nowhere to go with this,  
25 I don't think. If I look at the dynamic as it was,



1 I think he was probably being told to manage it, but he  
2 had no one to put in Father **MFA** place.

3 Q. But you don't know if he spoke to the Abbot or not?

4 A. I do not, no.

5 Q. The set-up -- there would be an Abbot who would be the  
6 head of the community and the headmaster, the head of  
7 the school?

8 A. That is correct.

9 Q. Could I ask you now, Michael, to turn to the very front  
10 of your red folder. You will see there what I would  
11 call a key and on one side you will see the name of  
12 a boy and next to the name you will see a pseudonym. Do  
13 you see that?

14 A. Yes, I do.

15 Q. Do you recognise the boy's name?

16 A. Yes, I do.

17 Q. The pseudonym I think the boy has been given is the  
18 pseudonym Steven; do you see that?

19 A. Yes, I do.

20 Q. I want to ask you about Steven. Was Steven somebody you  
21 knew at Fort Augustus?

22 A. Yes, I did.

23 Q. Where was he in relation to you age-wise?

24 A. So Steven was two years above me in my brother's class  
25 when I joined, yes.

1 Q. I think you tell us in your statement that you developed  
2 a concern, if not then but at least later on in life,  
3 about the way Steven was treated.

4 A. Later on I think ... extremely reticent about that  
5 incident or a series of incidents -- and how when  
6 I joined, which was after the alleged abuse had taken  
7 place, I think all of the boys need to look back and be  
8 honest and accept that he was taunted pretty mercilessly  
9 throughout his remaining years.

10 Q. Was the background that there was an allegation that  
11 Steven had been abused by a particular priest?

12 A. That is correct, yes.

13 Q. Who was the priest?

14 A. MEV

15 Q. How did this manifest itself then in relation to the way  
16 Steven was treated?

17 A. There were rhymes, there were songs, Steven might stand  
18 up in the study hall and there would be sucking noises  
19 made. It was pretty brutal.

20 Q. What was this seeking to represent? What was understood  
21 that had happened?

22 A. Yes, the alleged fellatio between him and MEV

23 Q. Do you know how this became public within the school?

24 A. I don't know who was instrumental in that. All I know  
25 is that when I joined the school, you know, this formed

1 part of the kind of daily language or banter.

2 Q. How did Steven react to this?

3 A. He was pretty good insofar as he would just sort of tell  
4 people to eff off or ignore it, so I think on the  
5 outside he was pretty resilient, but of course it must  
6 have had some impact. There was an incident that  
7 I witnessed myself when Steven was in his fourth year,  
8 his last year there, before he left, because I think  
9 I am right in saying he was expelled, where he had -- he  
10 had actually self-harmed. He had hurt his arm by  
11 running down a row of cubicles to get off sports and his  
12 arm was in plaster, and I remember him lying on his  
13 bed -- he had been drinking, he was intoxicated, and he  
14 was shouting about MFG who -- that was the nickname  
15 for MFG -- and MFG  
16 actually came into the dormitory at that time and  
17 I think that was -- that moment, that incident was  
18 pretty key in seeing Steven getting expelled or asked to  
19 leave the school.

20 Q. Do you know what happened in relation to

21 Father MEV

22 A. Sure. It was common knowledge that he had been sent to  
23 for this specific incident, yes.

24 Q. Then can I move on, Michael, and look to life after  
25 Fort Augustus. You provide us with some information

1           about that in your statement. Broadly I think you spent  
2           some time in the Royal Marines and I think you now run  
3           your own business in England.

4           A. That is correct, yes.

5           Q. In relation to impact, perhaps I can backtrack a bit.  
6           How would you summarise your own experience of  
7           Fort Augustus looking at the whole period that you were  
8           there as a boy?

9           A. I think the experience made us resilient, independent.  
10          It certainly toughened me up emotionally and physically  
11          as well. I think if I were to reflect on one thing,  
12          I think particularly in sort of today's society where  
13          there is a lot of emphasis on self-belief,  
14          self-confidence, I don't know if it was great in that  
15          regard, and it left a lot of individuals gasping for air  
16          in terms of, you know, leaving them sort of with  
17          insecurities and self-doubt.

18          Q. And then looking to the whole issue of impact then,  
19          I think what you tell us in your statement is that you  
20          don't think any of the incidents that may have happened  
21          at Fort Augustus that involved you has had a negative  
22          impact on you.

23          A. I think Fort Augustus was a sink-or-swim place and  
24          I think, if anything, it made me more resilient and  
25          those incidents kind of made me more resolved to sort of

- 1           overcome.
- 2           Q. Using that metaphor though, you were a swimmer?
- 3           A. Possibly, yes.
- 4           Q. But you also say you developed good friendships at
- 5           Fort Augustus.
- 6           A. Of course, very good friendships, yes.
- 7           Q. There was a time, I think, when you did contact the
- 8           police. You tell us about this in paragraph 48 of your
- 9           statement, and I think at that time that was in
- 10          connection with Father MFA This again will
- 11          come on the screen if you prefer to use the screen. Do
- 12          you remember that?
- 13          A. Yes, very much so.
- 14          Q. What was the basis then of making contact with the
- 15          police?
- 16          A. There were various reports in the media. I think the
- 17          media had taken a couple of facts and had run with them
- 18          and I had gone to the police. I have made it my
- 19          business to attend these hearings simply because I think
- 20          I can tell the truth from my own sort of fairly moderate
- 21          perspective and I think it will help.
- 22          Q. I think in particular you wanted to tell the police
- 23          about your experiences of Father MFA
- 24          A. Yes. I feel that was an example of where the church
- 25          failed to take action where it knew about abusive

- 1           behaviour.
- 2       Q.   You also say that you wanted to tell the police about
- 3           Steven.  That is what you tell us in paragraph 49.
- 4       A.   Correct.
- 5       Q.   Why did you want to raise Steven's position with the
- 6           police?
- 7       A.   Because I understand the law, and I know that if a large
- 8           number of people come forward and say that they knew
- 9           then, that it would help Steven's case, and so it was
- 10          important for me to come forward and say: look, this was
- 11          absolutely common knowledge.
- 12       Q.   What you want to tell the police, as you say in your
- 13          statement, was that you are positive that Steven had
- 14          been abused as a boy at Fort Augustus.
- 15       A.   I was absolutely positive that it was common knowledge
- 16          that he had been abused.
- 17       Q.   So really what you are doing was seeking to support
- 18          Steven's position?
- 19       A.   Correct, yes.
- 20       Q.   After that, did the police then make contact with you?
- 21       A.   Yes, around about six months later I was contacted by
- 22          the police in relation to a specific incident, which was
- 23          unrelated completely to any of the statement that I had
- 24          previously made.
- 25       Q.   What was this about?

1 A. They asked me about the [REDACTED]

2 Q. The one you talked about?

3 A. -- which we have spoken about.

4 Q. Was that in connection with Father [REDACTED] MRQ

5 A. That was in connection with Father [REDACTED] MRQ who

6 I had not mentioned during my previous statement.

7 Q. So what was the position now then? Why were they

8 investigating [REDACTED] MRQ

9 A. I do not know. But the police contacted me and said,

10 "Do you recall a [REDACTED] Were you

11 injured? Was matron involved?" So there were a series

12 of questions which suggested to me that someone else had

13 a slightly different -- a very different narrative to

14 what I believed to be the truth.

15 Q. What then happened?

16 A. I contacted the police and I made a statement to them

17 and I felt it put straight or repudiated some of those

18 questions/statements that had been put to me.

19 Q. What happened after that?

20 A. [REDACTED]

21 [REDACTED]

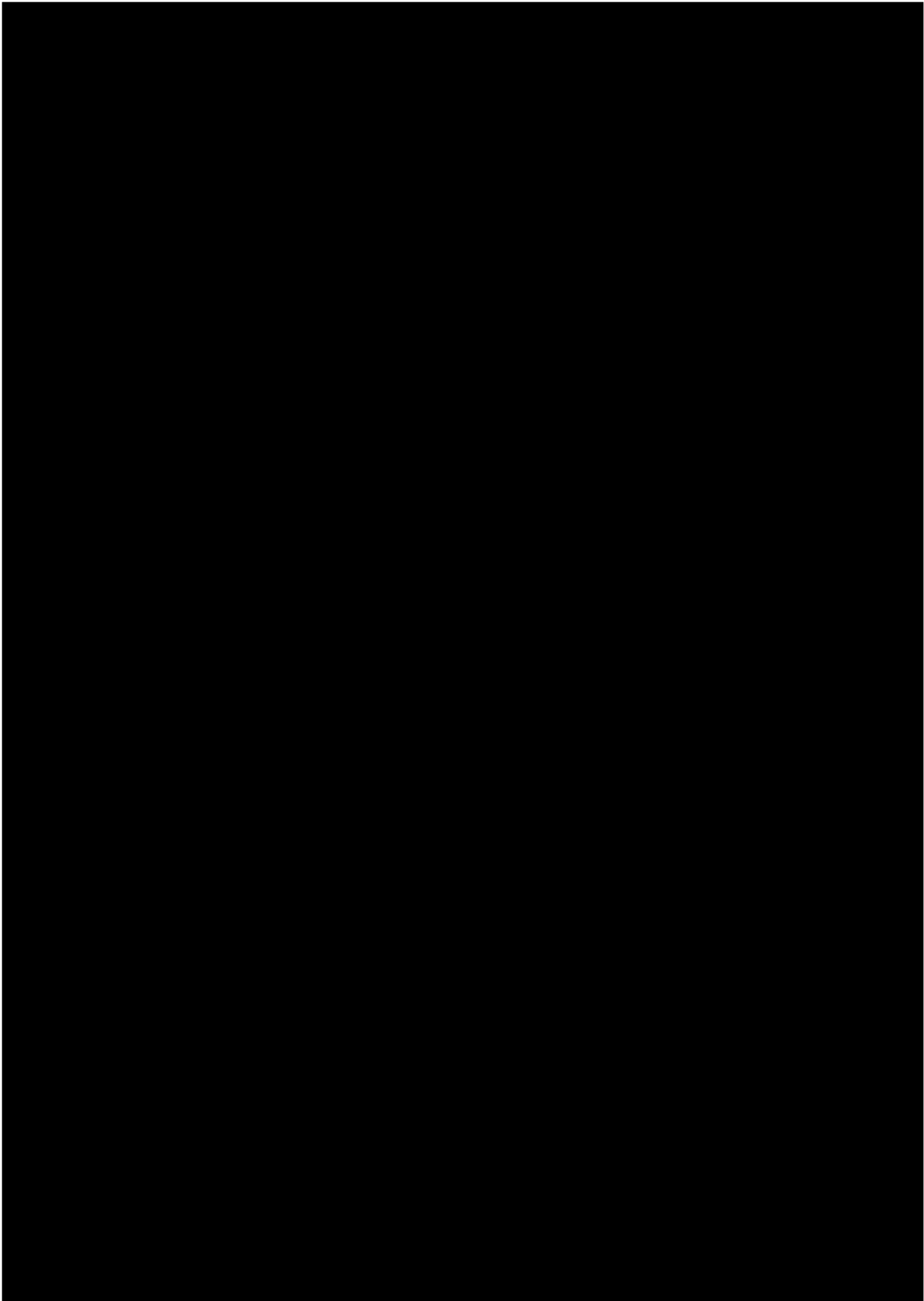
22 Q. [REDACTED]

23 A. [REDACTED]

24 Q. [REDACTED]

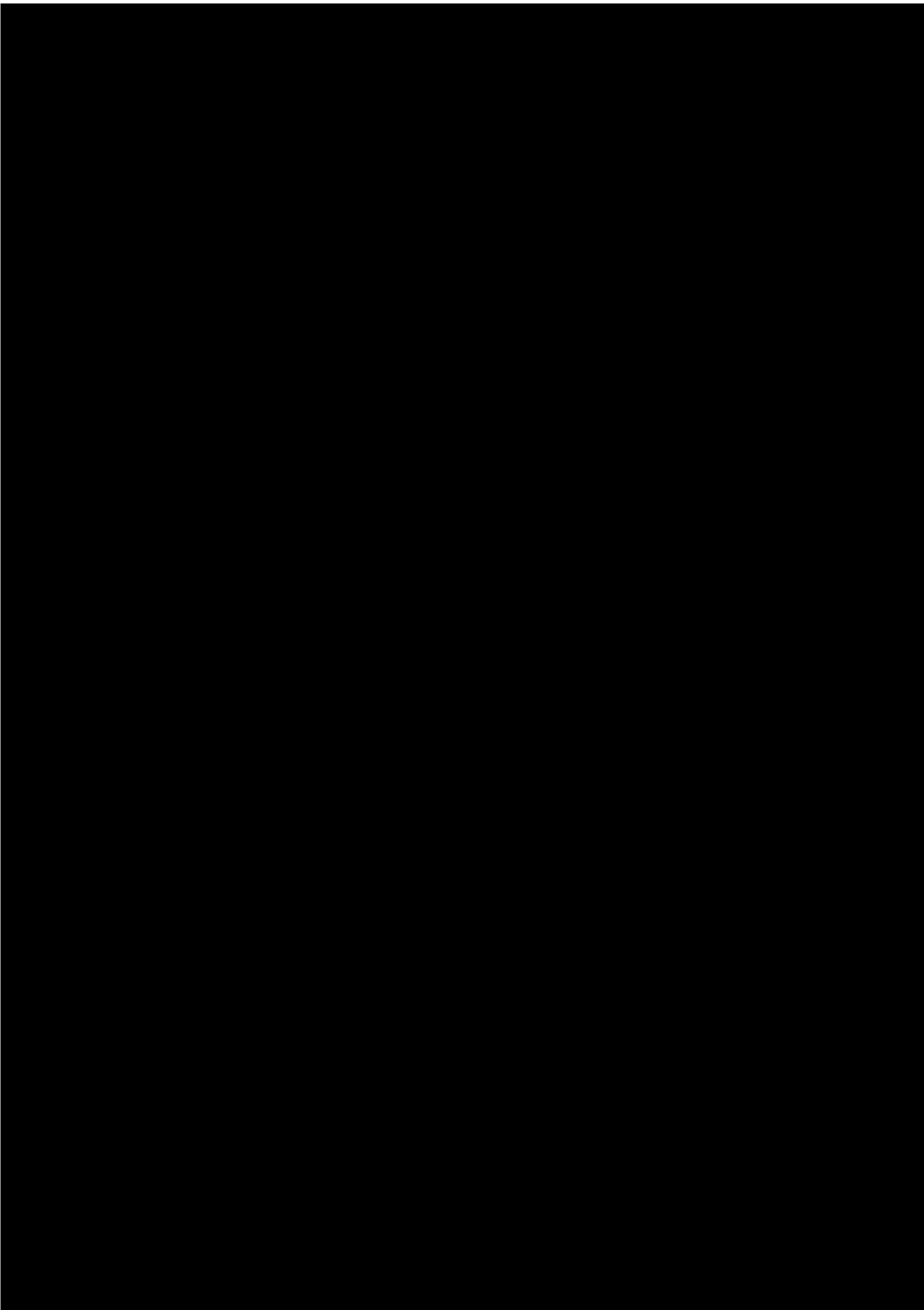
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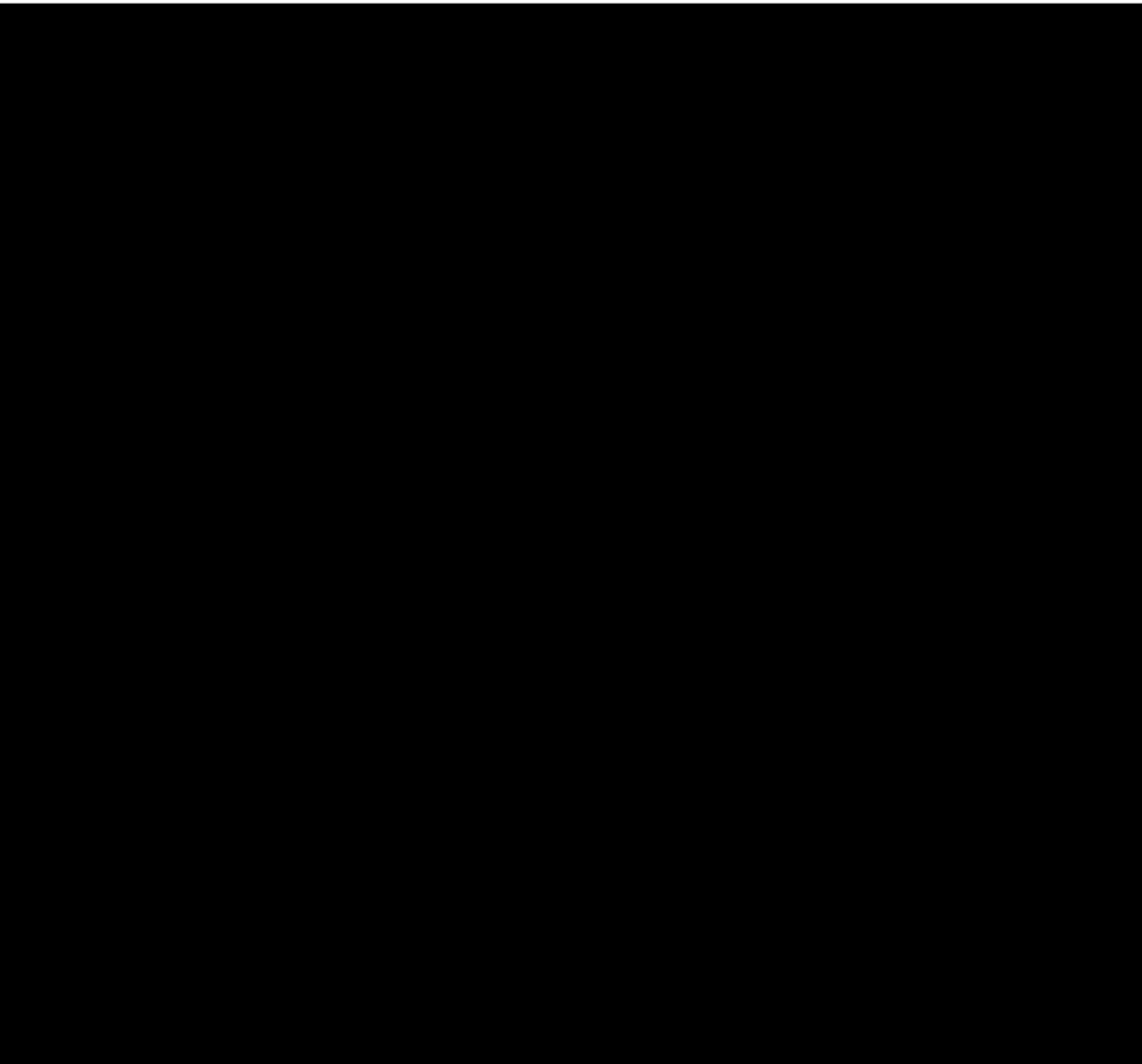




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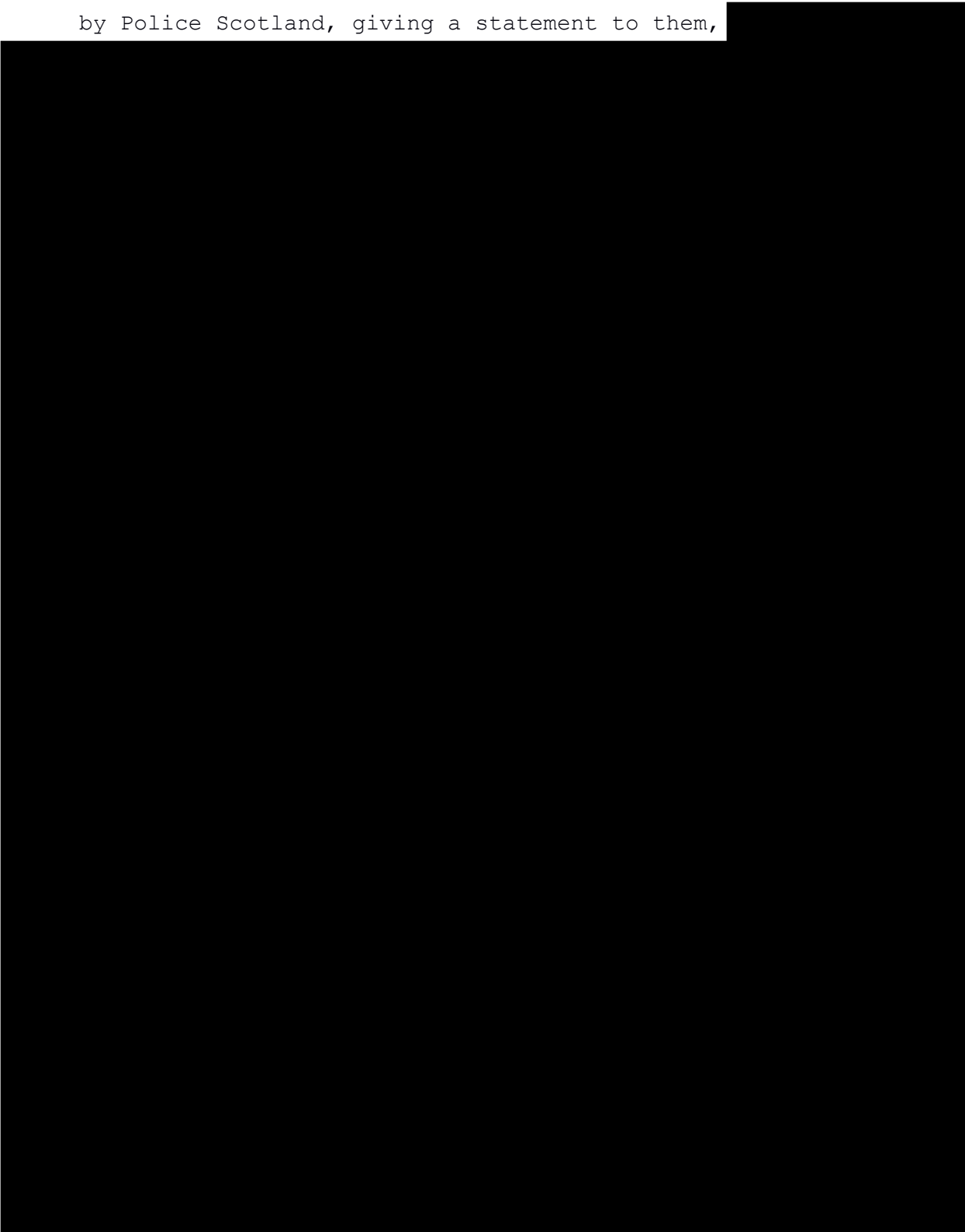


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18       LADY SMITH: I see in your statement you make some  
19               observations about the [REDACTED] Tell me  
20               about that. I don't want to know about individual names  
21               but ...  
22       A. Of course. I found it clumsy. I just found first of  
23               all -- it was no problem for me, but I found I went from  
24               having given a statement to the child support (sic)  
25               people in the police station, who were very good, who

1           advised me this was confidential and it would not be  
2           shared with others, to then subsequently being contacted  
3           by Police Scotland, giving a statement to them,



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1 Q. Were you on your own with the [REDACTED]

2 or --

3 A. Over the phone, yes.

4 LADY SMITH: Can you help me with this: what approach do you  
5 think they should have adopted on that matter?

6 A. I don't think it is their place to comment on the guilt  
7 or innocence of anyone or assume someone's position as  
8 a victim or survivor or assume how someone feels about  
9 something.

10 Q. Thank you.

11 [REDACTED]

12 [REDACTED]

13 A. [REDACTED]

14 [REDACTED]

15 [REDACTED]

16 [REDACTED]

17 [REDACTED]

18 [REDACTED]

19 [REDACTED]

20 [REDACTED]

21 [REDACTED]


22 [REDACTED]

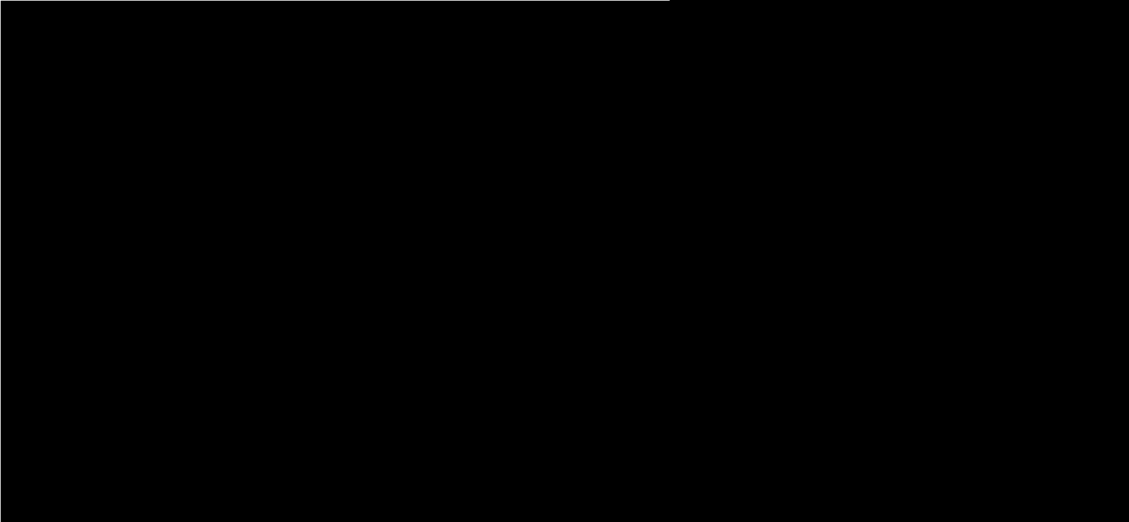
23 [REDACTED]

24 My other take away is the word "abuse" extends to

25 a lot of things and I think we should be differentiating

1           between sexual abuse and physical abuse, and I think  
2           what I saw when the media raised the Fort Augustus -- as  
3           helpful as the media was, they made a certain amount of  
4           theatre of it. One of the motives for my coming in and  
5           saying, hang on, we didn't all live in fear, it wasn't  
6           as bad as it is being made out, although there were  
7           isolated incidents. I think the media needs to stand by  
8           some pretty strict rules in that regard.

9           I found a lot of institutions were acting completely  
10          in their own interests so that they would not be  
11          criticised. So the media was getting out of this what  
12          they could, a story, prime time, 



21       MR MacAULAY: Very well Michael these are all the questions  
22           I have for you. Thank you very much indeed for coming  
23           and expressing the views that you have expressed.

24       A. Thank you very much.

25       MR MacAULAY: My Lady, no other questions have been put to

1 me to be put to Michael.

2 LADY SMITH: Are there any outstanding applications for  
3 questions? No.

4 Michael, that does complete all the questions we  
5 have for you. Let me just thank you for engaging with  
6 the inquiry in the way you have. You have provided  
7 a very helpful written statement and thank you for that.  
8 Thank you also for coming today to talk about your  
9 experience of Fort Augustus and your memories, many of  
10 which seem pretty clear and perhaps more recent than  
11 some people's, and for being so frank about your own  
12 thoughts and views, looking back both on your time there  
13 and your experience of the criminal process, all of  
14 which I am very interested in. Thank you for that and  
15 I am now able to let you go.

16 (The witness withdrew)

17 MR MacAULAY: My Lady, we have more oral evidence but  
18 perhaps we could have a short adjournment or have the  
19 morning adjournment now.

20 LADY SMITH: If we took the morning adjournment now --  
21 hopefully the next witness is almost ready, but we could  
22 have the morning adjournment rather than break again  
23 later on. Thank you.

24 (11.05 am)

25 (A short break)

1 (11.32 am)

2 LADY SMITH: Ms MacLeod.

3 MS MacLEOD: My Lady, the next witness is Sean O'Donovan.

4 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

5 SEAN RODERICK O'DONOVAN (sworn)

6 LADY SMITH: Sean, please sit down and make yourself

7 comfortable. You will see the red light is on on

8 the microphone: if I could ask you to try to stay in

9 a good position for the microphone, that is a great help

10 to everyone in the room and in particular to the

11 stenographers.

12 I don't know what papers you have brought with you,

13 it may be they are duplicated by what is in the red

14 file, but Ms MacLeod will explain that to you. Are you

15 ready for me to hand you over to her?

16 A. These are just rough notes I kept for myself in case

17 there was something I needed to refer back to but mostly

18 it is a duplicate of what is in there --

19 LADY SMITH: It is probably all in your statement, but feel

20 free to use your notes if that helps you.

21 Questions from MS MacLEOD

22 MS MacLEOD: Good morning, Sean.

23 A. Good morning.

24 Q. Are you Sean Roderick O'Donovan?

25 A. I am.

1 Q. Were you born on [REDACTED] 1949?

2 A. I was.

3 Q. Are you now 69 years old?

4 A. That's right.

5 Q. You have provided a statement for the inquiry and there  
6 is a copy of that in the red file in front of you.

7 I will give the reference for the stenographers:

8 WIT.001.002.3859. Sean, if you could start please by  
9 turning to the final page of the statement. Have you  
10 signed the statement?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. In the very last paragraph do you say:

13 "I have no objection to my witness statement being  
14 published as part of the evidence to the inquiry"?

15 Do you see that?

16 A. I see that, yes.

17 Q. Do you go on to say:

18 "I believe the facts stated in this witness  
19 statement are true"?

20 A. I do.

21 Q. Thank you.

22 If I can start, Sean, by asking you a little bit  
23 about your family background; you cover this in your  
24 statement. I think you tell us that you were born in  
25 Hull --



- 1 A. That is right, yes.
- 2 Q. -- and that you lived with your parents [REDACTED]  
3 [REDACTED]
- 4 A. That's right.
- 5 Q. You tell us that your father was in the RAF?
- 6 A. Correct, he was a squadron leader.
- 7 Q. Your family moved around a little bit.
- 8 A. Quite a bit, yes.
- 9 Q. And is that why [REDACTED] went to  
10 boarding school?
- 11 A. It was the official reason, I should say. That was how  
12 my father -- the RAF at that time would have provided  
13 substantial assistance with boarding school fees because  
14 of the idea that if you were a service family and moving  
15 from place to place, you would go school to school, so  
16 it was better if you could just go to one school and get  
17 everything through there. But I would also suggest  
18 I was sent to boarding school partly because of my  
19 father's view that an officer's child ought to go to  
20 a boarding school.
- 21 Q. I see.
- 22 A. So it was more -- there was a certain amount of class  
23 pressure.
- 24 Q. Did you start off attending a primary school in England?
- 25 A. Yes, I went to Lessingham Church of England Primary

1 School.

2 Q. And did you then attend a preparatory school --

3 A. Yes --

4 Q. -- also in England?

5 A. I spent a year at Lessingham Church of England. I spent

6 a year at the Church of England primary school at

7 Winkfield Row St Mary's when I was 6. When I was 7

8 I went to Alderwasley Hall in Derbyshire, a preparatory

9 school.

10 Q. Were you there from the age of about 6 to 11?

11 A. I joined Alderwasley Hall shortly -- a few days

12 literally after my 7th birthday and I left in the June,

13 which would have been a month or two prior to my 12th

14 birthday.

15 Q. You tell us at an earlier stage in your life your family

16 had spent some time in Singapore.

17 A. That's right.

18 Q. You had become unwell there?

19 A. Yes, when I just turned 3 we went out to Singapore, my

20 father had a posting to Singapore. While I was there

21 I was -- almost permanently ill with one thing or

22 another. I had polio, although they didn't realise it

23 at the time, it was what they called sub-clinical polio.

24 But I suffered from ultra-violet ray poisoning and

25 I collected that was available, plus a few things that

1           generally weren't. The doctors advised my parents if  
2           I was not returned to England I would probably die.

3           Q. I think you tell us that by the time you were at the  
4           preparatory school you were emotionally shattered?

5           A. At the preparatory school I was distinctly emotionally  
6           underdeveloped. My parents noted that I had suffered  
7           regression in Singapore, hardly surprising when you  
8           consider what I was going through, but they seemed  
9           surprised that a three-year old wouldn't jump at the  
10          idea, but when I went to Alderwasley, I didn't realise  
11          of course that part of the problem was that I was so  
12          much younger than everyone else in the class. I was 7  
13          and most of my classmates were 8 and a half coming up to  
14          9 years old. At the time you, although I didn't know  
15          it -- it was many, many years later I found out -- I do  
16          suffer from as Asperger's syndrome and that didn't help  
17          when it came to getting on. So emotionally I really  
18          wasn't in the right place.

19          Q. Academically at this time were you doing quite well?

20          A. Yes, academically -- partly why I went so early at 7 was  
21          because my father was convinced that was what was  
22          needed. When I was 5 I was IQ tested and given  
23          an extremely high IQ result, although the records  
24          weren't kept of that particular test. But because of  
25          that, it was deemed that I could cope academically with

1 everything, even though I was much younger.

2 Subsequently, I have -- I was retested as an adult,  
3 which is fine, so I know what the test should have  
4 shown.

5 Q. I think you tell us that you were aged ten when you  
6 passed the common entrance exam.

7 A. The first time, yes. In the fourth year I was at  
8 preparatory school you sat the common entrance as  
9 a trial run, so most of my class would have been 11  
10 coming up to 12, I was ten coming up to 11, and I passed  
11 it then.

12 Q. Did there come a time when your parents moved to  
13 Scotland?

14 A. My father left the RAF in 1960 and decided, for whatever  
15 reason, he would move the family to Scotland. But I was  
16 given a choice of which school to go to, either Belmont  
17 Abbey, which was the parent school of the prep school --  
18 Alderwasley was run by Belmont Abbey. [REDACTED]

19 [REDACTED] I had the alternative of going to  
20 Fort Augustus, and there were two reasons for choosing  
21 Fort Augustus: one, it was a lot nearer where my parents  
22 were going to be living and, secondly, and much more  
23 importantly, [REDACTED] wasn't going to be there. So  
24 such are the bases for the decision of a ten-year-old.

25 Q. I think you tell us you didn't realise it at the time

1 but that in fact having your parents quite nearby, you  
2 think, offered you some protection at Fort Augustus.

3 A. With hindsight I think that a lot of things that might  
4 have happened didn't happen simply because I saw my  
5 parents every week, and therefore it wasn't a question  
6 of telling them something that happened three or four or  
7 five weeks ago or even two or three months ago, it could  
8 have been happening two or three days ago and I was  
9 going to see them face to face every week.

10 Q. Did they live around 20 miles away --

11 A. They lived in [REDACTED] -- my geography was never too  
12 good -- 15 or 20 miles away.

13 Q. So you arrived at Fort Augustus Abbey School then in  
14 1961?

15 A. That's right.

16 Q. Can you tell me about your arrival and your initial  
17 thoughts of the school?

18 A. I was dropped off by my parents and found my way in.  
19 There appeared to be nobody around to tell me exactly  
20 where I ought to be going, so it took me a while to find  
21 out where I was supposed to be going and take my case  
22 upstairs to the dormitory and that sort of thing.

23 Everything was perfectly normal and it was a bit  
24 like prep school, although it was a boarding school, and  
25 I was used to that. The only thing that really

1           staggered me when I arrived, literally within half an  
2           hour, someone said to me, "Are you [REDACTED] brother?" so  
3           I said, "I'm not [REDACTED] and so I'm not his brother.  
4           Why? Who is [REDACTED] and they said, "He died last year,  
5           you look the spitting image of him", and that was --  
6           that was a bit of a shock.

7           Q. Did you ask any more about [REDACTED] I think that is

8           [REDACTED]

9           A. [REDACTED] I did ask, I said, "Who is he? What  
10          happened?" He said, "No one really knows. He was found  
11          in Loch Ness. It is assumed it was an accident."

12          Q. I think you mentioned you were intrigued by [REDACTED]

13          because people --

14          A. Because I apparently looked like him. He was very  
15          similar to me in a lot of ways. He was also an academic  
16          prodigy, to use a horrible word, but he was considered  
17          to be very bright.

18          Q. What was your understanding at the time of what happened  
19          to [REDACTED]

20          A. At the time I understood absolutely nothing about it  
21          because nobody knew or was saying anything. It was  
22          a dead subject. No one -- it was never mentioned again.  
23          It was only many years later I got people stating more  
24          about the circumstances and obviously that was just from  
25          the internet, so I can't really swear to them.

- 1 Q. I see. How many boys were at the school, would you say?
- 2 A. When I arrived, it was at its peak and the school roll  
3 was, I believe, 135.
- 4 Q. What was the age range of boys?
- 5 A. It would have been from 12 to 18.
- 6 Q. What were the sleeping arrangements?
- 7 A. There was one -- basically, there was one very large  
8 dormitory upstairs that had been split into two by  
9 a partition and also subdivided into cubicles, although  
10 the cubicles had no front coverings, they were just like  
11 horseboxes. Depending on where you were in the school  
12 you slept in some part of this giant dormitory. There  
13 were some smaller dormitories off to one side and to  
14 one -- one of houses had some in the more modern part,  
15 they had one in the more modern part of the building,  
16 which didn't involve me.
- 17 Q. When you arrived how many boys do you think were in your  
18 dormitory?
- 19 A. In the actual section I was in there would have been  
20 about 30 in bunks, but if you can imagine the top floor  
21 of a very large building, there were sort of wings  
22 and ... all divided up. So in the half I was in there  
23 would have been around about 50 or 60.
- 24 Q. Were you allocated to a particular house when you  
25 arrived?

- 1 A. Yes, we had -- there were only two houses, Lovat and  
2 Vaughan, and I was put into Lovat.
- 3 Q. Who was your housemaster in Lovat?
- 4 A. [REDACTED] MFE Father [REDACTED] MFE He was  
5 the housemaster of Lovat.
- 6 Q. What was his role?
- 7 A. His role was -- I am never really quite certain what  
8 housemasters did or didn't do at schools because to  
9 a large degree the school seemed to run by itself. He  
10 was -- definitely housemasters were involved in  
11 discipline and in general terms I think they were  
12 supposed to sort of act as sort of a quasi-paternal role  
13 but they didn't. But [REDACTED] MFE was more involved  
14 with discipline than anything else and he was also  
15 a [REDACTED]
- 16 Q. You mention in your statement he was only interested in  
17 the first XV rugby team.
- 18 A. He seemed to be in terms of being friendly or -- he --  
19 it was noted he was very hard to get to know, apart from  
20 a very privileged few and the privileged few appeared to  
21 be the front row of the first XV.
- 22 Q. In relation to the other house, Vaughan, was Father  
23 [REDACTED] MFG the housemaster there?
- 24 A. Yes.
- 25 Q. I think you had some difficulties with the food at the



- 1 school, Sean, is that right?
- 2 A. It is. To begin with it wasn't too bad. I was actually  
3 quite impressed. I had come from prep school so you are  
4 not used to good food at boarding school but the food  
5 started going downhill very rapidly. One, I'm not the  
6 best guest in terms of eating, so that partly is down to  
7 my -- I wouldn't call it fussiness, but there are  
8 certain foods I really couldn't swallow, but equally  
9 I noticed, very rapidly, that things like fresh  
10 vegetables and fruit were never on the menu. We rarely  
11 every saw anything much in the way of vegetables and  
12 fruit: it was potatoes, turnip and meat.
- 13 Q. Did you do anything about this at the time?
- 14 A. I told my parents and basically there wasn't a great  
15 deal anyone could do. Eventually, when my doctor at  
16 home decided that I might be not getting enough in  
17 the way of vitamins, I was put on a vitamin pill  
18 supplement.
- 19 Q. Was that your family GP in Inverness?
- 20 A. The family GP and my parent started bringing me extra  
21 food parcels, including fresh fruit.
- 22 Q. I think you also mentioned that the school agreed your  
23 parents could provide cornflakes for you.
- 24 A. That's right. I simply couldn't swallow porridge. That  
25 was a psychological thing and nothing to do with its

1 taste. I -- I would rather avoid it completely. And in  
2 order to get me to go and have breakfast they finally  
3 agreed that I could have cornflakes.

4 Q. You mentioned that in later life, when having had some  
5 X-rays, you found out that this issue in relation to  
6 food may have had an effect on you long-term.

7 A. Yes. Well, I suffered from what is generally called  
8 a slipped disc, which I know medically is not correct,  
9 but that is not the point, everyone knows what a slipped  
10 disc is. I went to see a top osteopath in London and he  
11 turned out to be the top orthopaedic surgeon at the time  
12 as well, a chap called Stoddard. He took one look at  
13 the X-ray of my back which he had had taken to see what  
14 was the matter, and he said, "This is clear evidence of  
15 malnutrition between the ages of 12 and 16", which  
16 realistically put is at the time of puberty, shall we  
17 say, because that is how -- because you don't come with  
18 a date mark. And that was the time, of course, I was at  
19 Fort Augustus and there is a malformation of my spine  
20 due to that malnutrition.

21 Q. Could you tell me a little bit about the set-up for  
22 washing and bathing at the school?

23 A. Yes. The dormitories were at the top floor of the  
24 buildings and the basement was basically the washrooms.  
25 There was a very large basement room, which covered

1 a whole wing -- one of the wings in the school. To give  
2 you an idea of size, because I can't remember the sort  
3 of sizes, down one wall was a row of about 20 wash  
4 basins side by side. Moving across the room there were  
5 then two island rows of wash basins back to back, so  
6 a total of five rows of wash basins, around about 100  
7 wash basins in the room, maybe a few less, I can't be  
8 precise, but certainly well over 60 or 70. Against the  
9 other wall, opposite the wall which had the basins,  
10 there was a row of shower heads -- no partitioning, just  
11 a row of shower heads down one wall, so there would have  
12 been about 15 or 20 shower heads.

13 At a raised part of the room at the end on a dais  
14 were a dozen baths. Again, no partitioning involved  
15 whatsoever, just the baths were there.

16 When I first arrived we washed in the morning in  
17 the wash basins, just hands and face -- there never  
18 seemed to be any opportunity to use the baths. We  
19 weren't given showers after games or anything like that,  
20 so it struck me as being a bit weird. I did tell my  
21 parents I was concerned I hadn't had a bath for three  
22 months and it did strike -- like all boys, I was quite  
23 happy not to wash, but I was a bit puzzled.

24 Q. So were you having showers then instead of baths?

25 A. No, there were no showers -- apart from occasionally,

1           once or twice a term, [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] would order that  
2           the entire school would have a shower and the entire  
3           school would troop through the showers in the same  
4           afternoon.

5           Q. How would that work then if there was 100-odd boys?

6           A. You would have 100-odd boys crouched under 20 shower  
7           heads.

8           Q. At the same time?

9           A. Virtually, yes.

10          Q. All naked?

11          A. All naked and all ages, so you had 12-year-olds and  
12          18-year-olds. It was noticed that the first XV, the  
13          18-year-olds, would cluster at one end of the showers,  
14          near the taps where [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] stood, controlling  
15          the taps. He would chat to them while they were soaping  
16          whatever they soaped in the shower.

17          Q. Was Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] generally involved in  
18          supervising the washing and the showering process?

19          A. No, he only supervised when he decided there was going  
20          to be a shower and then he would come down -- the  
21          supervision was very poor, generally speaking, in that  
22          sense. You didn't normally see much in the way of  
23          staff. It was basically you just ran everything by  
24          ourselves.

25          Q. How many times do you think this communal showering of

- 1 the whole school took place while you were there?
- 2 A. I would think about three or four times. Then at some  
3 point they decided they were going to use the baths  
4 again and then you had a weekly bath rota. Again, you  
5 still had to get into the bath stark naked in front of  
6 everybody else, but at least they were up on a dais, so  
7 once you were in the bath you were fairly shielded by  
8 the bath itself.
- 9 Q. Who was [REDACTED] when you arrived?
- 10 A. When I arrived it was Father [REDACTED] MFF
- 11 Q. Did that change during your time at the school?
- 12 A. Yes. I can't remember exactly when it was, but towards  
13 the end of my third year there, he suddenly departed and  
14 Father [REDACTED] MKT took over [REDACTED]
- 15 Q. You have mentioned the two housemasters of Lovat and  
16 Vaughan. Who were the other monks that you remember  
17 being at the school?
- 18 A. They varied. I am trying to remember who they were.  
19 You had people like Phillip Hynes. I think he taught  
20 art. You had ... I am --
- 21 Q. You mentioned a Father [REDACTED] MEW .
- 22 A. [REDACTED] MEW Yes, he taught [REDACTED] He also ran  
23 the cinema and there were a couple of others who names  
24 will come to me -- Father Andrew McKillop, he taught  
25 geography in the senior forms.

- 1 Q. Father [REDACTED] MEV
- 2 A. When I was there he was in the monastery but I don't
- 3 think he didn't really get involved. The only
- 4 involvement, as far as I was aware, was when we started
- 5 the cadet corps. He then came along as an instructor to
- 6 [REDACTED] because he taught boys how to play the
- 7 [REDACTED]
- 8 Q. Father [REDACTED] MRQ
- 9 A. Father [REDACTED] MRQ was a young teacher then. He taught
- 10 [REDACTED] And really he was -- well, that is all he
- 11 did when I was there.
- 12 Q. Looking at the schooling side of things then, how did
- 13 you find the teaching?
- 14 A. The teaching was appalling. You don't always realise
- 15 it, you don't know it, but one of my first complaints to
- 16 my parents was that in maths, for instance, I was being
- 17 taught the same maths as I had been learning for common
- 18 entrance, and I was being -- I was redoing -- rather
- 19 than moving on, I was redoing the subject. You would
- 20 have thought I had would have been perhaps happy with
- 21 that, but it did strike me as being -- I was a bit too
- 22 honest for my own good sometimes, so I did complain
- 23 about that. That didn't have a very good effect because
- 24 the complaint got back to the teacher involved and he
- 25 got upset about it.

- 1 Q. Was it your parents who reported your complaint to the  
2 school?
- 3 A. They didn't go to the school. It was to do with family  
4 relationships. My father knew a chap called [REDACTED]  
5 who ran the hotel called [REDACTED] He  
6 had known him from war time or because he had connected  
7 Fleet Air Arm and my father was in the RAF and there was  
8 a connection. [REDACTED] -- I can't remember his  
9 Christian name. [REDACTED] who ran the [REDACTED]  
10 had a brother, [REDACTED] MIH [REDACTED] who was a teacher at  
11 Fort Augustus, and my father mentioned this to [REDACTED]  
12 of [REDACTED] who mentioned it to his brother, who  
13 then rounded on me as being a telltale.
- 14 Q. Did Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] have a role in teaching?
- 15 A. The only thing Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] taught was [REDACTED]  
16 [REDACTED]
- 17 Q. What was his attitude towards teaching and teaching you  
18 in particular?
- 19 A. I can only say when I first arrived the first thing he  
20 did was he said, "You have to learn the catechism by  
21 heart, there will be a test, and if you fail the test",  
22 as half the class did, "you will get twelve strokes of  
23 the tawse for failing to memorise the catechism word  
24 perfectly".
- 25 Q. Did people fail the test?

- 1 A. Oh, they certainly did. About half the class.
- 2 Q. And what happened to them?
- 3 A. They got beaten and I was one of them.
- 4 Q. Where did that happen?
- 5 A. In either MFE office or MFG  
6 office. Those in Vaughan were sent to MFG  
7 MFG and those in Lovat went to MFE
- 8 Q. We will look at the discipline side of things shortly.
- 9 You mentioned that Father MFE pulled you  
10 up on one occasion for being lazy; could you tell me  
11 about that?
- 12 A. Yes, I can't remember which year it was in -- I think it  
13 was the third year I was there, it might have been the  
14 second, I really can't remember. He called me in and  
15 basically said that my marks that I had achieved in the  
16 exams, the end of term exams were higher than the marks  
17 I had achieved doing prep homework during the course of  
18 the term, and therefore that proved that I was idle  
19 because during the course of the term, when I had  
20 textbooks, I should have got higher marks during the  
21 term than I did at the exam.
- 22 Q. What was your response to this?
- 23 A. It proved the exactly the opposite: that I had made  
24 mistakes during the term and learned from them and, when  
25 the exam came along, I got the benefit of having done



1 the work.

2 Q. What did he say then?

3 A. Basically, "Get out, then", and he just dismissed me.

4 Q. Is that something that stuck with you, that memory?

5 A. Yes, because part of the problem I felt I had with  
6 hindsight -- because you don't notice it at the time --  
7 I felt that I was being penalised for being too clever.  
8 I didn't know it at the time, because I only came across  
9 this really when my own children went to school and we  
10 had to deal with the problem there, and that is when we  
11 discovered from various sources, the National  
12 Association of Gifted Children, from Mensa, from the  
13 Lincoln Gifted Child Unit, it is a very common for  
14 teachers to be antagonistic towards bright children.  
15 They feel threatened. Maybe they don't know why but  
16 they do make -- make quite a bit of a problem.

17 Looking back on it, I'm not certain that that wasn't  
18 happening at Fort Augustus, because I was the bright  
19 child doing too well, that they were going to at least  
20 not help me, if not actively hinder what I was doing.

21 Q. What role did sports play in the life of the school?

22 A. In Fort Augustus, if you played sports well, you were  
23 a god. That was what -- they concentrated on sports to  
24 that degree. There was -- we had to do PT, you had to  
25 do compulsory games, you had no choice about the matter.

1 To me it was sheer torture because I wasn't physically  
2 as strong or as active as some of my -- not even my own  
3 contemporaries, not even those my own age. I was weak.  
4 The polio had left me hampered in that respect.

5 Q. How did the school respond to that? Were you playing  
6 any sports?

7 A. I don't know if they were ever told I had ever had  
8 polio, they just basically -- you were just forced out  
9 into games, and one of the worst things I recall is  
10 having -- in the first year I was there, there was  
11 a game of rugby -- MFG was in charge of  
12 rugby for the juniors -- and at the end of the game,  
13 when we were being sent back to get changed off the  
14 playing fields, he noticed my knees weren't muddy and  
15 that apparently offended him. So he made me stand still  
16 in front of the rest of the class while he rubbed mud on  
17 my knees.

18 Q. What was the response of the rest of the class?

19 A. Huge hoots of laughter. I couldn't see why it was so  
20 important -- I was twelve and I couldn't see why it was  
21 so important I be humiliated like that on the rugby  
22 field. I knew I wasn't very good at rugby. It was  
23 hardly my fault. I couldn't suddenly grow muscles where  
24 I didn't have them.

25 Q. Do you recall any inspections of the school?

- 1 A. There were no inspections from outside inspectors.  
2 There never were, apparently.
- 3 Q. You mention that you had a stammer for part of your time  
4 at the school.
- 5 A. Yes, I had a -- I suppose I might have had a slight  
6 stammer when I arrived. I don't think so, I can't  
7 really remember, but within is the term it had developed  
8 into an absolutely appalling stammer and I could hardly  
9 speak anything outright.
- 10 When you have a heavy stammer, you have to trick  
11 yourself into speaking. You have to go round the houses  
12 and approach words from an oblique angle to get them  
13 out. You have to learn all sorts of tricks. But I had  
14 an appalling stammer at that time.
- 15 Q. Did the school look into this in any way or provide any  
16 assistance?
- 17 A. No, none whatsoever. They just sighed and got impatient  
18 when I couldn't say something.
- 19 Q. Did you have any idea at the time of what might be  
20 causing the stammer?
- 21 A. No. In those days you didn't ask, it was just  
22 accepted -- I was a kid with a stammer. It wasn't  
23 uncommon; a lot of kids had stammers.
- 24 Q. Did boys run away while you were at the school?
- 25 A. Not that I can be directly sure of. There were tales

1 and stories, but in a way, although you are living in  
2 a group of boys together, in a way you are not living  
3 together. I was very isolated, so I didn't really know  
4 what was going on around me, so if it happened  
5 I wouldn't necessarily have been told about it, only if  
6 I came to it. But there was a tale, and it has been  
7 reported subsequently, that a boy did run away, but his  
8 father brought him back and [REDACTED] MFF [REDACTED] beat him black  
9 and blue for doing so.

10 Q. That is a not something you remember yourself?

11 A. I can't say I personally remember it. I don't remember  
12 the person, I don't remember the incident, but that is  
13 just what I was told.

14 Q. Something you speak about in your statement, Sean, is  
15 authority and the particular authority that you were  
16 subject to at the school. You mention that in religious  
17 council, monks are subject to the authority of the abbot  
18 or the bishop and that it doesn't apply to laypeople.

19 A. It is the "doctrine of obedience" it is called and it  
20 is -- it relates to the relationship between a monk or  
21 a nun and the superior of monastery or convent, which is  
22 that they do -- they submit to the authority of the  
23 abbot. There is -- the same doctrine is applied to  
24 a secular priest, a parish priest, who submits to the  
25 authority of a bishop, and it is submission without

1 question.

2 Q. What about the boys? What was the position with the  
3 boys?

4 A. Absolutely no different to any other school in the land:  
5 the only authority the school had was that which was  
6 delegated by the parents. Certainly it wasn't that you  
7 could -- had to obey -- there was no such Catholic  
8 doctrine that children this to obey a teacher without  
9 question. That doesn't exist. That was -- it was  
10 implied to us that that was what existed, especially  
11 since we were at a monastery school or a school attached  
12 to a monastery, to be technically accurate.

13 LADY SMITH: Sorry, just so I can follow: are you saying it  
14 was implied to you that you were expected to be obedient  
15 to the school in the way that the monks had undertaken,  
16 through their vow of obedience, to be obedient to the  
17 abbot irrespective of what they were told to do?

18 A. Exactly. It wasn't a specific lesson taught to us and  
19 someone saying that this is what happens, it is just  
20 that is how the impression was given: that we were  
21 expected to -- you are here to do what you are told, you  
22 don't question authority. The doctrine of obedience  
23 would have been quoted as being why you didn't question  
24 the authority of the Abbot or the headmaster or anyone  
25 else.

1 MS MacLEOD: The exception you mentioned in relation to  
2 laypeople, your understanding was that didn't apply to  
3 you as boys at the school?

4 A. It didn't apply to laypeople and it certainly didn't  
5 apply to children. Children were only subject to the  
6 authority of their parents and even that wasn't total  
7 submission because, as St Paul put it: "Children obey  
8 your parents, parents do not drive your children to  
9 distraction". So there was automatically there a limit  
10 as to how far you were expected to go in obedience.

11 Q. You mention that you were under the obedience of the  
12 church and that was something your parents were told  
13 they couldn't challenge.

14 A. That is right. They were told that if there was  
15 a Catholic school that would accept me, they had to send  
16 me to a Catholic school rather than to any other school.

17 Q. And who told them that?

18 A. I don't know where it appears. There is somewhere in  
19 canon law a rule that Catholic parents are supposed to  
20 ensure that their children are brought up as Catholics,  
21 which means sending them to a Catholic school.  
22 I don't know quite how far down the line that can be  
23 followed. If the school is of poor quality, do you  
24 still require -- are they still required -- I don't know  
25 whether they are still required to do that.

1           But that was certainly my father's view because  
2           I did ask to be taken away from Fort Augustus and he  
3           said, "You have to go to it because it is a Catholic  
4           school and the local school in Inverness is not".

5       Q.   You say that you were told that in the Order of  
6           St Benedict the use of corporal punishment on children  
7           was acceptable.

8       A.   Yes, the quote was -- it was quoted to us that Order of  
9           St Benedict, the Rule of St Benedict was that, "Children  
10          are to be taught with stripes". It doesn't. I have  
11          read the Rule of St Benedict from cover to cover and it  
12          doesn't mention a single thing about it. It does  
13          mention one occasion where corporal punishment is  
14          recommended for children and that is where a child, not  
15          a schoolboy but a child in the monastery -- bearing in  
16          mind the rule was written in 800AD or 900AD and there  
17          would have been some children living in monasteries. If  
18          a child committed an offence such that, if committed by  
19          an adult, it would result in a penalty of  
20          excommunication, then the child, not being expected to  
21          understand that penalty, was to be whipped instead.

22          You have to remember that the penalty of  
23          excommunication was the most extreme penalty that the  
24          church could inflict on its members and, especially  
25          around about that time in history, a lot of people were

1           expecting the Second Coming imminently, it could have  
2           been tomorrow, and if someone was excommunicated when  
3           that happened, they were straight down to the hot areas  
4           of the universe, with no passing Go, no collecting £200.  
5           It was a very, very severe penalty, but a child couldn't  
6           be expected to understand that.

7           Then you have to ask what sort of offence would  
8           justify such a penalty. But it certainly wouldn't be  
9           dropping litter or having your hands in your pockets.  
10          It would be close to murder or attempted murder or  
11          something similar.

12         Q. We will come on to look at punishment and discipline at  
13          the school, but you mentioned there "taught with  
14          stripes". What do you mean by that?

15         A. A strap or a slip would leave a stripe -- stripes were  
16          how you regarded -- it was another word used for  
17          strokes, strokes of a birch or a strap or whatever.

18         Q. Were you bullied by other children when you were at the  
19          school?

20         A. Totally. I was subjected mostly to ostracism. There  
21          was a little bit of physical but it wasn't so much what  
22          they actually physically did but what they were  
23          threatening to do the whole time. You were living under  
24          threat and under fear and I was bullied.

25         Q. Who was doing the bullying? Was it a particular boy or



- 1 boys?
- 2 A. It was a group of my own classmates, basically, who --
- 3 they were copying what the school did. The school held
- 4 pupils up to ridicule, so they basically held me up to
- 5 ridicule.
- 6 Q. Did the staff or the monks know you were being bullied?
- 7 A. I complained to my parents about it. My father
- 8 complained to the headmaster who did absolutely nothing,
- 9 apart from telling my father he had stopped it all. He
- 10 hadn't. The monks and the staff -- MFE would
- 11 have been aware of it and he decided that not having
- 12 friends was my own fault and therefore I ought to be the
- 13 one who made friends.
- 14 Q. Is that something he said to you?
- 15 A. Yes. He said, "You are not making enough friends, you
- 16 have to make friends, you are wrong, you have to go out
- 17 and make more friends". Well ...
- 18 Q. What did you think about that at the time?
- 19 A. I wondered how on earth I was supposed to do the
- 20 impossible. But you are 12 and you can't really argue
- 21 back against a housemaster at that age and you are left
- 22 totally puzzled.
- 23 Q. You have mentioned him before, a teacher by the name of
- 24 MIH
- 25 A. That's right.

- 1 Q. What are your recollections of him and his classroom?
- 2 A. He was quite happy to use ridicule as a means of class  
3 control. It was quite a standard method, but it was not  
4 a good method. He was not particularly brilliant at  
5 teaching but then none of them were. But he at one  
6 stage -- he had asked -- we had left our home -- prep  
7 books, exercise books -- there was a place, a bookcase  
8 outside the staff room, where they would be left divided  
9 into sections. The expression I had used was -- the one  
10 I had used for those sections was cubbyhole, which is  
11 a perfectly good English word. He decided -- for some  
12 reason he decided that was a childish word and he made  
13 a great deal of fun of me for using a childish word,  
14 which wasn't childish, because actually if you look in  
15 the Oxford English Dictionary, the first definition is  
16 "a division in a shelf".
- 17 Q. Was that something he did in front of the class?
- 18 A. In front of the class. Yes, he got the class to laugh  
19 because I was using this childish expression.
- 20 Q. You mention another occasion when he asked a question of  
21 the class --
- 22 A. Yes. He -- it was a maths class and he -- quite  
23 classic, you put the problem on the board and then he  
24 would say, work it out, and then he would go around the  
25 class and see what the answers are. I can't remember

1 what the problem was, but let's say the answers the  
2 class were giving were all in the hundreds, 105, 190,  
3 188 or something, when it came to me I said it was 3 or  
4 4 or whatever, which got --

5 Q. Quite a different answer?

6 A. Way, way different. It got hoots of laughter from the  
7 class because I was so completely wrong and he let the  
8 laughter continue and only when it had died down did he  
9 then turn around and say, "Actually, he got it right",  
10 and that didn't -- didn't endear me to the class because  
11 then they were made to look foolish and they blamed me.

12 Q. Did you feel the bullying of you was exasperated by the  
13 attitude of the staff?

14 A. They were encouraging it -- and in fact MFE  
15 had been known to opine that bullying was good for you,  
16 made a man of you. Didn't say what sort of a man, mind  
17 you, but it made a man of you.

18 Q. Was there a time where you had a rash on your body while  
19 you were at the school?

20 A. Yes, towards the end of my time there -- it would have  
21 been when I was in the fifth form, so we are talking  
22 about summer term, I don't know -- I developed --  
23 I noticed an overall red rash and I had gone to the  
24 matron to say what is up. I -- she had decided that it  
25 was quite possibly an infectious disease so I was

1 promptly sent to sickbay, which was in a building, the  
2 lodge building, separate from the main building.

3 I stayed in sickbay until the doctor was happy that  
4 whatever it was I had wasn't infectious and I wasn't ill  
5 apart from the unsightliness of the rash.

6 Q. By this time was Father [REDACTED] MKT [REDACTED]

7 of the school?

8 A. He was [REDACTED] then. I came back, obviously from  
9 the sickbay, and the first lesson I was back in for was  
10 his lesson, on [REDACTED] I think it was, and he looked at  
11 me and he said, "Oh look, the spotted creature from the  
12 swamp has returned".

13 Q. What was the response of the class to that?

14 A. They laughed. I should have walked out but I didn't  
15 have the nerve to walk out on him, but I ... It just  
16 struck me as being utterly wrong that a priest, that  
17 a [REDACTED] who knew that I was suffering from problems  
18 in that regard -- well, it was just so completely  
19 outrageous that I didn't even know what to say.

20 Q. Would it be fair to say that you were fairly unhappy  
21 while you are at the school?

22 A. I was bitterly unhappy from fairly early on. In the  
23 first week or two I thought it was okay, I thought, this  
24 is great, this is public school, this is an exciting  
25 adventure, and then gradually it started to deteriorate.

1 It wasn't so gradual, but by the end of the first term  
2 I was miserable.

3 Q. Did there come a time when you considered taking your  
4 own life?

5 A. Yes, that would be about two terms in. I'm not certain  
6 if anything particular had triggered it, but I had found  
7 [REDACTED] and I took it into the toilets, the old  
8 toilets that were in a separate part of the building,  
9 they were a bit more remote from the rest of the school.

10 I locked a cubicle, [REDACTED]  
11 [REDACTED] What  
12 I hadn't bargained on was how excruciatingly painful the  
13 whole procedure was. Therefore I managed to step back  
14 to relieve the pain and I tried to take -- I tried to  
15 build up the courage to go through it because  
16 I determined -- I wasn't 100% determined to begin with,  
17 but having got halfway through, I thought I was going to  
18 see this through to the end.

19 But while I was trying to build up courage, you  
20 think of various things, and an image came to my mind of  
21 Brother [REDACTED] MNS [REDACTED] who was a [REDACTED] monk,

22 [REDACTED]  
23 [REDACTED] He used to befriend the  
24 lonely ones. He would make a point of making a beeline  
25 in the playtime, in break time, he would always be

1           around and he would always go across to the ones who had  
2           no friends, and I just couldn't really face what I would  
3           be doing to him --

4       Q.   I think --

5       A.   -- so I stepped back and left it and I didn't return to  
6           that approach again.

7       Q.   I think, Sean, later in life you wrote a poem about this  
8           and in particular in relation to Brother **MNS** role in  
9           that.

10      A.   Yes, he died in about 1990, I suppose, around about  
11           then.  But shortly after the turn of the century I got  
12           involved with the old boys' site and his name came up  
13           and that triggered in me a need to write about  
14           Brother **MNS**

15      Q.   You have provided a copy of your poem to the inquiry.  
16           I will give the reference for the transcript: it is  
17           WIT.003.002.2871.  There is a copy of the poem as well  
18           in your folder.  Would you like to read some of the  
19           poem; it is up to you.

20      A.   Yes I will, I will try.  Excuse me if I stop in the  
21           middle because it does bring back certain memories.  It  
22           is called "Angel" in memory of Brother **MNS**

23           "I stood on a hill in the Highlands and screamed to  
24           the gods in my pain.

25           "But all that came back was a silence and a long

1 lonely walk in cold rain.

2 "I stood on the edge, [REDACTED]

3 [REDACTED]

4 "Just one step and my pain would be ended, though  
5 mother would weep for my end.

6 "You have seen them portrayed in their glory, with  
7 great wings and bright robes, there they stand, but the  
8 angel who came in my story was a [REDACTED] with a smoke in  
9 his hand.

10 "Oh brother, help me for I am frightened, please  
11 stay with me just for a while.

12 "And my hand felt his grip as it tightened, my  
13 despair driven back by his smile.

14 "The glad hand has smiled with loud voices, they  
15 grip firm, but take more than they give, but you who had  
16 spurned the world's choices, taught a lonely young boy  
17 how to live.

18 "I have slept in a ditch with my rifle and been glad  
19 of the shelter it gave, and all the world's wealth  
20 seemed a trifle, fool's gold that the foolish would  
21 crave.

22 "I have eaten off paper and china, drunk the finest  
23 of wines and cheap beer, but never a meal tasted finer  
24 than those served with friendship and cheer.

25 "I have worked in the heart of the city, watched the

1 money go round without end, but sterling or euros or  
2 dollars cannot measure the hand of a friend.

3 "Every step of my life and my travels turns a page  
4 in the lesson you taught, a conundrum that slowly  
5 unravels, a treasure that cannot be bought.

6 "The humblest of monks, dearest brother, saved  
7 a frightened small child on that day. You gave me  
8 a gift like no other, such a gift I could never repay.

9 "In all my life, in all the miles I have travelled,  
10 amongst all the people I have met, spoken to, heard of,  
11 read about, never have I met a man who so wholly and  
12 totally embodied the teachings of Christ. Would that I  
13 could be just a fraction of the man he was."

14 Q. Thank you very much for sharing that with us, Sean.

15 Were there teachers at the school who left during  
16 your time? I think you mentioned they may have had some  
17 concerns or at least not enjoyed their time at the  
18 school.

19 A. There were quite a few teachers who came and went or  
20 left and we didn't always know why.

21 Q. You mention a Mr Anderson.

22 A. Yes, he certainly used to complain about the nature of  
23 the school. He was a good English teacher, I think, or  
24 would have been as far as -- if I had been more  
25 receptive in those days, but he didn't stay very long



1           and there was a chap called McKeffen(?), who came from  
2           Inverness, who came in as an English teacher. He lasted  
3           about a year before he gave up in disgust.

4       Q. How did you find out about those two teachers and in  
5       particular their feelings about the school?

6       A. Anderson was quite open. He would say things in class  
7       pretty well. McKeffen, you would just hear.

8       Q. What would Mr Anderson say in class?

9       A. Basically that it was a bit of a Philistine place, that  
10       the food was disgusting. He cooked his own meals in his  
11       own room rather than eat in the refectory. Basically,  
12       you just got the impression from the way he was talking  
13       that he had no great love of the place.

14      Q. Was there a fire at the school?

15      A. Yes. In the first term I was there, one of boys who was  
16      quite proud of the fact he had been expelled from every  
17      school he had ever been sent to had determined to get  
18      expelled from Fort Augustus as well, so he went down to  
19      the basement where the trunks were stored, poured some  
20      paraffin over them, and set light to them.

21                Having set light to the place, he then raised the  
22      alarm immediately because he had no intention of anyone  
23      being hurt. The fire was certainly well set. The  
24      school was evacuated in the middle of the night. The  
25      fire brigade put the fire out -- the Abbey had its own

1 fire brigade and they put the fire out before it did any  
2 serious structural damage, although it was very close to  
3 doing so. It was a question of burning through the  
4 ceiling and had it gone through the ceiling, the whole  
5 place would have gone up like a bomb.

6 Q. Do you remember which year the fire took place?

7 A. Yes it would have been in November or so of 1961.

8 Q. I don't want the boy's full name, but do you remember  
9 the boy's name?

10 A. No. He was in the class below me. I knew him vaguely,  
11 but I hadn't at that stage -- I -- probably in those  
12 days I would have known his name at that point, but  
13 I certainly can't remember it now.

14 Q. Can I now ask you about discipline and punishment at the  
15 school.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Who was in charge of discipline?

18 A. The housemasters were principally, although the  
19 headmaster was as well. So it was -- the headmaster was  
20 deemed as being more serious -- more serious offences  
21 were dealt with by the headmaster in theory and  
22 housemasters dealt with everything else.

23 Q. So if we look first of all your own housemasters and  
24 Father MFE how did he discipline boys?

25 A. Both housemasters used the same thing, a strap, a tawse,

1 for any offence -- or even for no offence.

2 Q. Were you belted by Father **MFE**

3 A. Yes, about -- despite my best efforts, believe me, I was  
4 making an effort -- two or three times a term for the  
5 whole time I was there.

6 Q. So can you tell me then what would happen? How would it  
7 come about that you were to be punished by him?

8 A. Anything which displeased them. It could be simply that  
9 they announced an inspection of the desks that you were  
10 using in the study hall where you did your prep, and if  
11 it was untidy you could be sent to see **MFE**

12 Q. Who would carry out the inspection?

13 A. The prefects would in that case, but it might also be  
14 **MFE** walking around the school, seeing you  
15 doing something which he decided at that time wasn't  
16 good enough and he would tell you to report to him later  
17 on.

18 Q. He could tell you to report to him or prefects could  
19 also --

20 A. Yes, yes.

21 Q. -- send you to him?

22 A. Mostly it was him. He would find fault with something  
23 and then you would have to report to him after lunch,  
24 I think it was, and then it was -- you would get belted  
25 by him.

- 1 Q. When you were reporting to him after lunch, would that  
2 be to his study?
- 3 A. To his study, yes.
- 4 Q. What would happen then when you got to his study?
- 5 A. You walked in, it was -- it was a time when he was  
6 handing out the beltings -- it wasn't just you, there  
7 would be quite a queue.
- 8 Q. So would the queue be outside the study?
- 9 A. Yes, yes. There would be three or four boys waiting  
10 outside.
- 11 Q. When it was your turn to go in, what would happen once  
12 you were in the room?
- 13 A. You would just open the door, walk in -- you had to tell  
14 him what you were there for and you had to tell him you  
15 had come to be beaten basically it was down to humiliate  
16 you.
- 17 Q. What would he do then? Would he ask you to --
- 18 A. You would hold your hand out and then he would hit it  
19 however many times he wanted to with the tawse and then  
20 you would change hands and he would hit the other one.
- 21 Q. Was it always on the hands that he hit you?
- 22 A. Always on the hands -- pretty well always as far as  
23 I was concerned. That was what he basically did.
- 24 Q. How many times on a particular occasion would he hit you  
25 on the hands?

1 A. Between three and six on each hand, so between six and  
2 twelve strokes in total.

3 Q. Did that leave marks on you?

4 A. Not that I particularly noticed, but it certainly left  
5 you with very sore hands for a while.

6 Q. Were there occasions when [REDACTED] was also  
7 involved in --

8 A. [REDACTED] main involvement -- [REDACTED] MFF  
9 main involvement was on the three-weekly tests. Every  
10 three weeks you sat a series of tests for the subjects.  
11 If you failed on any test -- we were was never quite  
12 certain as to how many subjects you had to fail on or  
13 what the rules were because they never really published  
14 the marks on these things so you didn't know what was  
15 happening anyway.

16 Q. How would you find out?

17 A. You would be summoned by [REDACTED] MFF who would thrash you.

18 Q. Did that happen to you?

19 A. No I avoided it. One, I didn't fail tests that much,  
20 but also I think because -- he seemed to have favoured  
21 whipping boys, a bit like Wackford Squeers did in  
22 Nicholas Nickleby. And the ones who failed -- who  
23 seemed to be sent to him, their parents lived in Barra  
24 in the Outer Hebrides, they are not going to be able to  
25 get to them quickly. My parents were just down the road

1           so possibly -- at one stage **MFF** did tell my parents  
2           I had been treated very leniently, which gave the  
3           impression that he would have been overly keen to hit me  
4           but he didn't want to because my father was down the  
5           road.

6           Q. You mentioned boys getting thrashings from him if they  
7           failed a test. What was your understanding of what was  
8           involved in those thrashings?

9           A. Depending on the boy, he would either cane them in his  
10          study or send them to the dormitory where they would  
11          have to change into pyjamas. I cannot say of my own  
12          personal experience certainly friends and classmates had  
13          told me they had to drop those pyjamas and they were  
14          caned on their bare backsides. I say "caned", most  
15          people would imagine a cane to be a thin ratan stick  
16          which is quite common. The thing he used was a piece of  
17          ash or birch rod which would have been about three foot  
18          long, about half an inch thick at least, more like  
19          a walking stick than a cane. And he -- the normal was,  
20          say, six to eight strokes to a boy, it might be up to  
21          twelve strokes for those he felt deserved it.

22          Q. Is that details that you heard about from the boys at  
23          the time?

24          A. Heard about and also endured because, although it wasn't  
25          to do with the weekly tests, he would come into the

1 study hall when we were in the study period, the study  
2 hall being again a very large room with about 60 or 70  
3 desks in it. We had been sent there as a class to do  
4 some quiet study. Well, children don't, they talk, and  
5 **MFF** had come in when people were talking and  
6 laughing, he had asked to own up those who had been  
7 talking and laughing. I owned up, not so much because  
8 I had made any noise but because I thought it would put  
9 me in good favour with the others, not knowing what was  
10 going to happen. We were taken to his study and all the  
11 rest got between six and eight strokes, you didn't have  
12 to guess that because you would hear it --

13 Q. From outside?

14 A. From outside.

15 Q. How many boys were involved in this?

16 A. About half a dozen, I can't remember exactly, but  
17 I should think six, it might have been five, it might  
18 have been seven, and when it was my turn I only got four  
19 strokes. That I put down to the fact that I was a lot  
20 younger than the rest. But in terms of thrashing, it  
21 was a question of what the result was. I had been caned  
22 at prep school with a thin cane and it stung and you  
23 would go "ouch" and you would rather it not happen but  
24 then it's all over. But I checked in the bathrooms  
25 afterwards because the others encouraged me to and I was

1           absolutely staggered by the sheer depth and width of the  
2           bruising that had been left on me.

3           Q.   On this occasion was it the cane that you described as  
4           being like a walking stick --

5           A.   Yes.

6           Q.   -- that he used?

7           A.   Yes, that's right.  That is what he always used.

8           Q.   Were you clothed or was it your bare backside?

9           A.   I was clothed.  Two boys were given two extra strokes  
10          because they dared to move while this was happening.  
11          I have no doubt about that, even though I wasn't  
12          physically outside the room when it happened because  
13          I just don't see why anyone should make that particular  
14          story up, and I know what he did to me so I know what he  
15          was likely to do to others.

16          Q.   Were you given this treatment by MFF on any  
17          other occasion?

18          A.   No, because I steered well clear of him.  He did imply  
19          when I had sat O Levels that I had made a right mess of  
20          them but then he couldn't go too far.  He couldn't  
21          really.  Even he had to agree to accept that there was  
22          a certain amount of truth you have to live with.

23          Q.   You have told me about the injuries that you saw on  
24          yourself on that occasion.  Did you ever see other  
25          injuries on boys in the showering area for example?



1 A. Yes, yes, you saw them when they were in showers. You  
2 would notice a couple would be striped like zebras and  
3 they had just been to see him.

4 Q. You have provided a photograph to the inquiry and I am  
5 going to put that on the screen for you. It is at  
6 WIT.003.002.2870. Could you tell me what does this  
7 show?

8 A. This was a photograph -- I came across it on the net  
9 many years -- many, many years later looking up this and  
10 that to see what I could find out about -- it was partly  
11 to do with Fort Augustus, looking to see what I could  
12 find out about the use of corporal punishment. But this  
13 came up and this was a result of a scandal at a place  
14 called Court Lees, an approved school in England, which  
15 The Sunday Times had ferreted about in. Court Lees, as  
16 I say, was an approved school, it was a juvenile prison,  
17 and a 17-year-old had absconded and when he had been  
18 recaptured, this is what they did to him. My first  
19 thought on seeing that photograph was that he got off  
20 quite lightly, he should have had MFF he  
21 would have ended up being really bruised. But this  
22 bruising, this sort of marking there, was on the light  
23 side for Fort Augustus. That is partly why I kept it;  
24 just to remind me that that was --

25 Q. How does that compare to the bruising or the marks you

- 1 saw on yourself on the occasion --
- 2 A. This is much, much lighter. The marks -- the stripes  
3 that I was left with were much broader, deeper and  
4 blacker.
- 5 Q. Thank you. I think you mentioned that there was  
6 an occasion where the matron had to become involved in  
7 treating the wounds of a boy after he had been punished  
8 by [REDACTED] MFF
- 9 A. Yes, that was more to do with -- that was reported in  
10 the old boys net that subsequent inquiries with the  
11 press and it came out, there was a lot of argument  
12 exactly what had happened and who had reported what and  
13 why and when, but a boy had been beaten by  
14 [REDACTED] MFF This was after I had left the school,  
15 and he was in his second occasion as a [REDACTED] He  
16 had returned in a role, and he had beaten a boy, but the  
17 boy had fallen ill, also with flu, and matron had been  
18 treating him, putting him to bed I suppose, and had  
19 noticed how badly bruised he was or how -- apparently he  
20 was bleeding and she had decided or said that she was  
21 going to complain and get it stopped. But whether it  
22 happened ... beyond that, I couldn't tell you. That was  
23 simply a reported occasion which I could understand.
- 24 Q. I see. Something you heard later in life?
- 25 A. Yes.

1 Q. In your statement at paragraph 55 you describe  
2 Father [REDACTED] MFE you say he was a sadomasochist?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Could you elaborate on that for me?

5 A. Yes. Even at the tender age of 12 I knew a few things,  
6 12/13. I was aware of the fact that, partly because of  
7 prep school, that if corporal punishment was not applied  
8 terribly vigorously, shall we say, that the sensations  
9 it aroused could actually be considered quite pleasant.  
10 They would at times treat it as a game of poker, a game  
11 of chance, and that was -- I knew -- I didn't know  
12 anything about it. I didn't know anything about  
13 the subject as such, but I was aware of the  
14 circumstance. When I arrived at the school I was  
15 delighted to find the school had a very well stocked  
16 library and, on looking for a book to read, one of  
17 the first books I lit on was Seven Pillars of Wisdom by  
18 TE Lawrence, Lawrence of Arabia. In that book, which  
19 I didn't realise at the time was a first edition and,  
20 therefore, definitely not expurgated, it was as  
21 originally written, there was a chapter which described  
22 Lawrence's capture by the Turks at a place called  
23 Deraa and his subsequent torture and the treatment of  
24 him. It rang a bell, a very large bell, that sort  
25 of I knew what he was talking about and of course there

1           were plenty of dictionaries, so you could look up the  
2           word "sadism" and "sadism" led you on to  
3           "sadomasochism". Then I was given a name to know what  
4           I could feel myself and I knew to some degree what they  
5           were talking about.

6           Q. Did you raise this with Father MFE

7           A. Not directly. Not in so many words, but what happened  
8           was that I was, as I say, aware of what he was  
9           because -- you could tell from the way he looked when he  
10          was wielding the strap that he was enjoying this  
11          mightily. Some boy -- on one occasion a boy had gone  
12          into his study at night and removed this strap and  
13          thrown it away or got rid of it or hidden it, whatever,  
14          I am not certain what happened but it was enough for  
15          MFE to appear in front of the assembly and demand  
16          a return of it. He was so upset because, not only had  
17          the boy taken the strap he used to beat us, but they had  
18          also taken a strap which he kept as a memento, because  
19          it was the one that was used on him when he was  
20          a schoolboy, and I thought at the time that this is  
21          remarkably odd; who would keep such a thing as  
22          a memento? But I was convinced that he was a sadist and  
23          sadomasochist to a degree because he probably enjoyed it  
24          himself.

25                 There was an occasion where he was going to punish

1 me for something or other, I cannot remember exactly  
2 what, but I said something to the effect that gave him  
3 to understand that, shall we say, I knew what he was and  
4 that I understood and that I was of a similar  
5 persuasion, although, you know, go easy on it, as it  
6 were, and he did. But not immediately, but subsequent  
7 to that he never hit me that hard again.

8 Q. Did he say anything in response to what you had said to  
9 him?

10 A. Not directly. And -- you have to accept that I was,  
11 what, 14 years old, frightened out of my skin. I was  
12 saying something out of sheer instinct. It was  
13 not rational, it was not a planned approach, it was not  
14 something which I had rehearsed, it was just --  
15 something told me to say it, to say -- and it wasn't  
16 a direct statement, it was just words that gave him to  
17 understand I wouldn't have said what I did without  
18 believing what he was and he wouldn't have understood  
19 it -- there is an expression: it takes one to know one,  
20 and that is basically what it came down to.

21 Q. I think you say that it seemed your comment mitigated  
22 against his enjoyment of beating you?

23 A. Yes, because there is again another expression that goes  
24 around: when the masochist says, "Hurt me", the sadist  
25 says, "No". I'm not at all certain whether (a) he might

1           have suddenly thought, oh, we have a fellow feeler here  
2           that I will be decent to, or, if he is enjoying it,  
3           I will make certain he doesn't.

4           Q. You mentioned how you could see that Father **MFE**  
5           **MFE** enjoyed punishing boys.

6           A. Yes.

7           Q. You mention in your statement that he would be almost  
8           drooling with pleasure.

9           A. "Slack-jawed and drooling" is the expression they use  
10          and, believe me, that fitted exactly: the jaw drops and  
11          (indicates) you could see his absolute delight. The  
12          expression on his face is -- I can't describe it any  
13          better than that, to say that -- but the term  
14          slack-jawed is basically what -- exactly what it says.

15          Q. I think you say that it was quite horrible.

16          A. Oh, yes. When someone is enjoying what they are doing,  
17          they are doing that sort of thing, it doesn't make -- it  
18          is very difficult to cope with that.

19          Q. In relation to when Father **MFE** issued punishment and  
20          when he didn't, was he consistent? What was his  
21          approach?

22          A. Totally random, totally -- certain things were fixed.  
23          If you had an untidy desk or some prefect had decided  
24          then he would simply beat, but a lot of the time it was  
25          simply whimsical on his part. He would be wandering

1 around the school and he would see you doing something  
2 or not doing something and determine that that was  
3 an event of punishment.

4 On one occasion he came into a classroom -- there  
5 had been some noise in the classroom -- and he didn't  
6 bother asking who had made the noise, he simply  
7 determined that the entire form would be beaten,  
8 including myself and I was outside the room, because of  
9 a practice you had to have someone on the door to open  
10 the door for the teacher so the teachers didn't have to  
11 sully their hands actually opening the doorway.

12 I pointed out to him that I couldn't possibly have been  
13 involved with whatever was going on because I was  
14 outside the room he said, "So what? You are part of  
15 form, hold your hands out".

16 Q. On that occasion was the whole form sent to their  
17 housemasters?

18 A. Yes, the entire form.

19 Q. And what was the punishment meted out on that occasion?

20 A. I think it was -- as far as I was concerned, he hit me  
21 eight times, four on each hand. I think the others,  
22 depending on who they were, got six on each hand. As  
23 I said, I was younger than the rest and I think there  
24 was a certainly amount of hindsight that I was being, to  
25 a certain degree, they treated me more leniently in

1 theory in that sense so they could tell my parents  
2 truthfully: oh no, we don't punish him as severely as we  
3 do the rest. I don't know for certain. Some of this is  
4 hindsight, which leads me to feel that is what was  
5 happening.

6 Q. You mention an occasion where a jockstrap was mentioned  
7 by Father [REDACTED] MFE

8 A. Yes he simply appeared in the study hall one evening and  
9 he announced to the whole school, the bulk of the school  
10 who were there in the evening doing their prep, that if  
11 any boy felt he needed an athletic support or  
12 a jockstrap for games he was to go to see him,  
13 Father [REDACTED] MFE in his study and he would ensure  
14 that he got one that fitted properly. I'm not quite  
15 certain what the fitting of a jockstrap would volume of  
16 but I can only guess.

17 Q. What was the response to that?

18 A. Nobody said anything. We were not allowed to talk, so  
19 having just having announced it, he just left the room.  
20 A few people were puzzled. Afterwards we thought it was  
21 strange but embarrassing. When you were in a halfway  
22 stage of changing, you are not quite certain whether you  
23 are or not.

24 Q. You mention a Mr Fowles.

25 A. Mr Fowles, Derek Fowles, yes. He was the history



1 teacher.

2 Q. You say that -- I think he witnessed an occasion where  
3 you were being bullied.

4 A. Yes, I was being tormented in a room used as a common  
5 room. They were pounding me and I was in tears.

6 I can't remember exactly, but one of the things they  
7 were doing was making me sit on a chair, which they  
8 swung around at high speed, so I would fly off it.

9 Q. Who was doing this? Was it older boys?

10 A. It was boys in my class, who were all older than me.  
11 There was a group of them. Derek Fowles turned up when  
12 this was happening and said nothing about it, apart from  
13 he was looking for a workforce to go up to the library  
14 and help clear out some old books, and he was going to  
15 take any form he could find. But he certainly did  
16 nothing about the bullying, not directly. If he said  
17 anything to anybody, he certainly never mentioned it to  
18 me.

19 Q. Did prefects discipline you themselves? You have talked  
20 about being sent by prefects to your housemaster, but  
21 did they themselves discipline you?

22 A. No, they weren't allowed to do anything. That didn't  
23 stop them occasionally, not to me, but they did. A boy  
24 in the dormitory, one of them was beaten by a prefect  
25 using a long clothes brush.

- 1 Q. Was that something you witnessed?
- 2 A. Yes, directly opposite me.
- 3 Q. Can you tell me about that? How did the incident start?
- 4 A. I can't remember what the boy had done. Two prefects
- 5 came in one carrying this long-handled clothes brush and
- 6 decided whatever it is this boy had done, he -- you
- 7 didn't pay attention to what others were doing to
- 8 a large degree, I should point this out it was, but it
- 9 dawned on me there was two of them standing in this
- 10 boy's cubicle, he was bent over the end of the bed, and
- 11 they the walloped the hell out of him with this clothes
- 12 brush.
- 13 Q. What was he wearing?
- 14 A. Pyjamas.
- 15 Q. What was the outcome or aftermath of this?
- 16 A. They went off, and there was a bit of a stunned silence,
- 17 a bit of shock, and then we put it behind us because
- 18 that is what happened.
- 19 Q. Which part of the boy's boy was being hit?
- 20 A. Backside. He was bent over a bed end and the prefects
- 21 decided they were going to administer punishment.
- 22 Q. Was the boy injured?
- 23 A. I don't know.
- 24 Q. One person you mention as not administering corporal
- 25 punishment is Father MKT

1 A. Yes, he was a [REDACTED] but as far as anyone knows --  
2 I don't know of him administering punishment.

3 Q. Did you notice a change at all in the regime when he  
4 became [REDACTED]

5 A. No, because then he was there really for the last year  
6 I was there, and by that time I was more interested in  
7 the fact it was the last year I was going to be there,  
8 as far as I was aware, and therefore, I think, that was  
9 really -- that was all uppermost in my mind. I would  
10 have said there was no great change apart from the fact  
11 he, as far as I am aware, did not carry on this business  
12 of beating boys for failing tests.

13 Q. We have spoken about Fathers [REDACTED] MFF [REDACTED] MFE and  
14 [REDACTED] MFG [REDACTED] Is it your understanding, you  
15 say, that they were all former [REDACTED]

16 A. Father [REDACTED] MFE was. I don't know whether [REDACTED] MFG  
17 [REDACTED] MFG was a [REDACTED] I'm not  
18 certain if he was or not and I don't know about  
19 [REDACTED] MFF [REDACTED] But Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] certainly was.  
20 He was very proud of the fact he had been a [REDACTED]  
21 [REDACTED]

22 Q. Is that something he would mention?

23 A. He would mention it on more than one occasion.

24 Q. Did you ever see Father [REDACTED] MEW [REDACTED] mete out physical  
25 punishment?

1 A. It depends what you call physical punishment. He used  
2 to knuckle the top of a kid's head if he was really  
3 annoyed with him. I don't know if you would call that  
4 punishment. It was certainly unpleasant. I saw that  
5 happen once and that was it.

6 Q. To somebody else?

7 A. No, somebody sitting next to me, some kid who had been  
8 a bit too loud-mouthed, smart-mouthed, a bit annoying  
9 and **MEW** as I recall, just tapped his knuckles on  
10 his head or something. It was momentary.

11 Q. One thing you do say, Sean, is that the school was  
12 renowned for homosexuality.

13 A. Yes. I didn't know at the time, obviously, but my  
14 father admitted later to me that when we were talking  
15 about my going to Fort Augustus, the headmaster of my  
16 prep school, who was a Benedictine monk from Belmont  
17 said, "You do realise that Fort Augustus is renowned for  
18 homosexuality?" but I don't know from -- in what  
19 direction he was talking about: was he talking about the  
20 monastery, was he talking about the school, or was he  
21 talking about the interaction between the monastery and  
22 the school? My father didn't want to hear and therefore  
23 I went to Fort Augustus and I only discovered this much  
24 later in life.

25 Q. Did your father tell you?

- 1 A. Yes. He admitted -- my father -- my father eventually  
2 came around to admitting that things hadn't gone well.
- 3 Q. I think you say that while you were at the school you  
4 were subject to some homosexual advances from pupils.
- 5 A. Yes, there were a couple of events, the usual sort of --  
6 well, usual ... As far as I am aware it is quite common  
7 to have an older boy masturbating in front of you to  
8 show you how grown up he was.
- 9 Q. Did that happen to you?
- 10 A. Yes, and then there was another occasion, something very  
11 similar, out in of the school grounds, when we were out  
12 in the fields walking -- going for long walk in the  
13 roads around, where there was some sort of mutual  
14 comparison of genitalia to see who was developing and to  
15 what degree. But I was aware that there were homosexual  
16 relationships between boys.
- 17 Q. How were you aware of that?
- 18 A. One because there were complaints that boys were -- they  
19 didn't want to be approached by some of these --
- 20 Q. Who made these complaints?
- 21 A. Other boys who would say. They would say to keep well  
22 clear off so-and-so or whoever because he was weird or  
23 he was queer.
- 24 Q. Would they say that to you?
- 25 A. Not directly, but you are a group of boys and you can

1           hear it.  There were some concerns and various things  
2           were said.  There were strange bits of conversation  
3           which you didn't -- didn't make a great deal of sense  
4           until many years later when you start to learn a few  
5           other things about these things.  So nothing directly in  
6           one sense, there was no sort of deep discussion, no one  
7           sat around in a group and discussed what was happening,  
8           it was just that things are said.

9           Q.  You mentioned an older boy masturbating in front of you:  
10          was that in the school building?

11          A.  It was in these old toilets.  I had been hiding out --  
12          there was -- a run or something had been ordered and  
13          because it was a wet, cold afternoon, I decided to see  
14          if I could avoid it and so I had hidden out in these  
15          toilets to try and keep out of the way until it was  
16          finished.  This other boy had decided to do the same  
17          thing and basically forced me to watch him.  He was  
18          a lot older than me.

19          Q.  How old were you at the time?

20          A.  I would have been 13.

21          Q.  How old do you think he was?

22          A.  17, 16, 17, 18, I couldn't ...

23          Q.  You mention a particular boy -- I don't need his name --  
24          who you say would fluctuate between being a bully and  
25          then making advances towards you.

- 1 A. Yes. He was --
- 2 Q. Can tell me a little about that.
- 3 A. When he started, he was one of the keener ones to  
4 antagonise me, and then he decided at some point that he  
5 would switch over completely and start making friends.  
6 So he was one of the ones involved in one of the  
7 homosexual episodes. I don't know whether he was or  
8 not, it was just -- boys grow and boys experiment and  
9 they do all sorts of things and so it doesn't mean  
10 a great deal but for a while it seemed he wanted to be  
11 friendly and then he switched back again to being  
12 an enemy again, as it were. But by that stage that was  
13 towards the end of my time at Fort Augustus anyway so in  
14 some ways it was -- it was having less effect.
- 15 Q. Did you hear anything about any kind of sexual  
16 relationships between pupils and any of the staff while  
17 you were at the school?
- 18 A. Nothing at all.
- 19 Q. You mentioned a comment that you overheard a boy say in  
20 relation to a bar of soap.
- 21 A. Yes, I still don't know to this day exactly what he was  
22 referring to. All I overheard was his saying -- one boy  
23 saying to another, "That is the second bar of soap  
24 I have had to throw away".
- 25 Q. What did you understand that to relate to?

1           A. I wasn't at all certain exactly what had happened to  
2           a bar of soap that you would have to throw it away.  
3           I got -- for some reason I had the impression it was  
4           involved with some -- it had become enfouled in some way  
5           to do with how it had been used for washing but -- or  
6           someone had taken it and borrowed his soap and used it  
7           and was going to have to have thrown away. It didn't  
8           make a great deal of sense. It was only much, much  
9           later on in life when I read that one of the responses  
10          to rape is to wash -- the victim of a rape will want to  
11          wash and wash and wash and wash, and I suddenly thought,  
12          well, I wonder whether that was what he was referring  
13          to, but I couldn't say for certain because it was later  
14          on in life I found out about that.

15          Q. Something you comment on at paragraph 78 is -- you say:

16                 "People who join a monastery are not sexually  
17                 normal."

18                 Could you develop that for me?

19          A. Yes, quite easily. When you join a monastery you take  
20          vows of chastity: poverty, chastity and obedience.  
21          Chastity is to avoid all sexual relationships. A  
22          perfectly normal person doesn't normally avoid all  
23          sexual relationships, therefore by definition you are  
24          not normal. It doesn't mean to say there is anything  
25          morally wrong with anybody -- and I stress that I'm not



1           trying to suggest that in any way -- but it is fairly  
2           straightforward that someone joining a monastery is by  
3           definition not normal and therefore they are going to be  
4           camouflaging anybody whose abnormality is of a less  
5           desirable nature. There are plenty of people who are  
6           asexual and they have no desire to have sexual  
7           relationships with anybody or anything. That is quite  
8           standard, so it is not a -- but in a monastery you are  
9           not likely to get the people -- men who have a normal  
10          attraction towards women because they are not going to  
11          go into a monastery if they have normality.

12         Q. You say:

13                 "Starting from the position of sexual abnormality  
14                 within the setting of a boys' boarding school meant that  
15                 you had some of the wrong people in the wrong place at  
16                 the wrong time with young children and things were bound  
17                 to happen."

18         A. Yes. Guaranteed to happen, sooner or later, depending  
19                 on how frequently and how severely. Who can tell? It  
20                 is like keeping a lit candle in the gunpowder store:  
21                 sooner or later there is going to be an explosion.

22         Q. When you say "some things are bound to happen", what  
23                 kind of things are you thinking of there?

24         A. You have teachers who in any case -- anyone who wants to  
25                 be a teacher needs to want to enjoy being around

1 children, otherwise there is not much point in being  
2 a teacher. You have teachers who abuse their position  
3 of authority and take delight in doing that. In  
4 a boarding school the kids can't even get away from  
5 them, they are there the whole time, and if you have  
6 somebody whose sexuality is abnormal to some degree and  
7 you are putting them together with pubertal boys who are  
8 also going through sexual changes, well, anything could  
9 happen. It is just a question of what the opportunities  
10 were.

11 My understanding about a lot of these things is with  
12 the sexual offences it is mostly opportunistic and very  
13 rarely is it planned. There is only one occasion I have  
14 heard of when it was totally planned and that is  
15 a school in England which was run by two convicted  
16 paedophiles who bought the school in order to have  
17 a ready stock, but -- I'm not suggesting that happened  
18 at Fort Augustus. But I can't imagine any school where  
19 you have such things put together that you will never  
20 get a circumstance -- I'm not suggesting these things  
21 happened every day or were a regular thing. When I was  
22 there for four years I can't honestly say I knew of any  
23 serious sexual or even any direct approach by any monk  
24 to any boy. But that doesn't mean that I don't think it  
25 could happen.

- 1 Q. You tell us that later in life you read some posts on  
2 the Corbie website.
- 3 A. Yes.
- 4 Q. Could you tell me what the Corbie website is?
- 5 A. A corbie was the badge for Fort Augustus, a corbie being  
6 a crow which was supposed to have saved the life of  
7 St Benedict. That is historical. The website address  
8 was [www.corbie.com](http://www.corbie.com) and that was the website developed  
9 for the old boys to publish photographs or to -- they  
10 had a bulletin board, a discussion board group which you  
11 could join and take part in.
- 12 Q. Do you know how it was developed: by the school, by  
13 former boys?
- 14 A. An old boy of school had developed the site. It  
15 subsequently turned out that he had disliked his time at  
16 the school immensely but he thought maybe there were  
17 others who actually enjoyed it and for their benefit he  
18 would create a website for those who actually enjoyed it  
19 could --
- 20 Q. Do you know when the Corbie website or forum was  
21 created?
- 22 A. I have no idea. I went onto a site called  
23 Friends Reunited and that would have been in the  
24 beginning part of 2000 or maybe 2001, but I think it was  
25 2000, I can't remember exactly. They gave a link which

1 led to the Corbie website. My impression was that it  
2 was fairly new because they had a discussion group, a  
3 discussion group section and the way these things are  
4 constructed is that these posts have numbers, and it was  
5 obvious there weren't that many posts before I started  
6 posting.

7 Q. When you looked at the forum were you able to see posts  
8 from other old boys?

9 A. Yes, that is the idea of a bulletin board, so whatever  
10 you post is visible to anybody who wants to go on the  
11 forum.

12 Q. I think what you say is that there were responses from  
13 others on the Corbie that suggested to you that  
14 homosexuality most definitely had happened at the  
15 school --

16 A. Oh yes.

17 Q. -- between pupils and some of the staff.

18 A. Yes, it -- to begin with -- "no" is the simple answer  
19 because to begin with it was just Shangri-La in the  
20 Highlands, what a wonderful time everybody had, a  
21 tremendous adventure, a wonderful place the staff were  
22 brilliant. When I arrived on it, my first post on it  
23 was quite literally -- I said I had raised a glass when  
24 I heard the school had shut and I raised a second glass  
25 when I heard the monastery had shut and a whole bottle

1           when I heard the old boys' association was finally going  
2           to close its doors. That was done deliberately to stir  
3           up the mud, which it did. It took two or three years  
4           and then eventually others came forward and said: he is  
5           telling the truth, it wasn't such a wonderful place, a  
6           lot of bad things happened up there.

7           Q. Was that people responding to your posts --

8           A. To my posts.

9           Q. -- on the Corbie forum?

10          A. Yes, on the Corbie forum.

11                 At that point there was also -- this was -- I can't  
12                 remember exactly when now, it would have been around  
13                 about 2003/2004, something like that, but I can't  
14                 remember when, it might have been a year or two either  
15                 side, there was a lot of news about the investigations  
16                 in Ireland and other places into church-run facilities.  
17                 I had made a comment on the Corbie website to the extent  
18                 I couldn't really believe that a place like  
19                 Fort Augustus hadn't had, on some occasions, some fairly  
20                 severe sexual assaults or sexual wrongdoings given that  
21                 it was a Benedictine house and boarding school and given  
22                 that every other Benedictine house and boarding school,  
23                 it seemed, across the country and in other countries was  
24                 suffering from these things that if Fort Augustus was  
25                 the only one where that didn't happen, that would be

1           rather strange.

2           Q. Did there come a time when you decided to set up your  
3           own forum?

4           A. Yes, because I had stirred up so much mud on the  
5           Corbie -- there was quite some bad ill-feelings flying  
6           around. I was accused of not actually ever having gone  
7           to the school in the first place, as one chap tried to  
8           claim. I thought that I could be kicked off this site  
9           quite easily, the webmaster could decide I would be  
10          no longer allowed to post, so rather than lose contact  
11          with the few people who I knew had suffered at  
12          Fort Augustus, I set up a group using Yahoo, which you  
13          could do very easy in those days -- I don't know whether  
14          you still can, but the group is still open -- and I made  
15          it plain that I would not -- I would allow whoever  
16          I wanted on this site but I would not allow anyone to be  
17          bad-mouthed by anybody else and it was to be a safe  
18          place for people to come and talk about what they  
19          wanted.

20          Q. What was your forum called?

21          A. "Fort Augustus Old Boys."

22          Q. Was this a private forum?

23          A. I don't know whether that -- how you would describe it.

24          Q. Could anybody enter the forum or did they have to go  
25          through some kind of process?

- 1 A. They had to come through me. They had to actually  
2 apply.
- 3 Q. What was involved in that?
- 4 A. Simply telling me their name and what years they were at  
5 Fort Augustus. They also had to agree -- not that  
6 I could stop them -- they weren't going to abuse any  
7 other member.
- 8 Q. Once you became a member of the forum could you then see  
9 the posts of other old boys?
- 10 A. That's right. You could see everything that had been  
11 posted on the forum by the other old boys and you could  
12 respond and they would see your response.
- 13 Q. The responses that you got on that forum and your own  
14 forum you set up, did you get responses that involved  
15 accounts of alleged abuse at the school?
- 16 A. Not in gross detail but simply that there were boys, old  
17 boys who basically said, "Yes, the same as what he  
18 said", you know, "It was bad".
- 19 One chap came on and he said, "I was at  
20 Fort Augustus in 1940 and it was just as bad then". He  
21 must have been fairly old when he posted that, in his  
22 90s, and he said, "It hasn't changed then because it was  
23 terrible when I went to school", and it became clear  
24 that this was a problem a lot of people had seen.
- 25 Q. Did people make reports on your forum of physical abuse?

1 A. Physical abuse, hints at the sexual abuse. There was  
2 emotional abuse, which no one really talks about because  
3 that is the hardest thing of all to describe, but they  
4 reported it, but they didn't -- they didn't sort of  
5 write graphic novels on the whole thing, it was just  
6 really -- the whole point of the forum was other people  
7 would know that they were not alone. That was the  
8 crucial thing.

9 Q. Is the forum still in operation?

10 A. Yes, it is. It is very rarely used. There is very  
11 little activity on it because it has served its purpose  
12 because shortly -- once it reached its height of about  
13 40 members, once it reached there and there were a few  
14 postings, [REDACTED]  
15 [REDACTED] and quite a few of them got in contact with  
16 journalists and lawyers and moved on because they knew  
17 they could and they knew they were no longer the only  
18 ones that it had happened to because one of the things  
19 you were told or that was implied was that everybody  
20 else was happy and you were the only one who suffered  
21 anything and therefore you were at fault.

22 Q. Do you know which year you set up the old boys' forum?

23 A. Which year? It would have been around about 2006,  
24 I suppose. I can't really remember because -- I was  
25 involved with a lot of things at that stage. My



1 business was collapsing. I was collapsing under the  
2 business. There was nothing wrong with my business,  
3 that was working fine, but I wasn't doing as well as the  
4 business was, so --

5 Q. Around about that time?

6 A. A lot of things were going on about that time and so it  
7 would have been around about the early part of the  
8 2000s.

9 MS MacLEOD: My Lady, I think we are slightly past 1 o'clock  
10 now and it may be convenient to take the lunch break  
11 now.

12 LADY SMITH: I think we probably should. Just to help us  
13 plan for this afternoon, how much longer?

14 MS MacLEOD: We don't have too much longer to go. I would  
15 expect to be finished within half an hour.

16 LADY SMITH: Is that all right with you, Sean, if we break  
17 for lunch now and start again at 2 o'clock?

18 A. That is perfectly fine by me.

19 LADY SMITH: Thank you. We will do that then.

20 (1.01 pm)

21 (The short adjournment)

22 (2.00 pm)

23 LADY SMITH: Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Sean. Are you  
24 ready for us to carry on?

25 A. Yes, indeed. I am fine, thank you.

1 LADY SMITH: Ms MacLeod, when you are ready.

2 MS MacLEOD: My Lady.

3 Good afternoon, Sean. In paragraph 81 of your  
4 statement you describe the whole regime of the school as  
5 being oppressive and terrifying.

6 A. That's right, yes.

7 Q. That is your recollection?

8 A. The discipline of the school was very -- in the sense  
9 of there was no patrolling of staff around the corridors  
10 you and weren't kept under the discipline in that  
11 nature: it was all based on fear, that you didn't dare  
12 do anything against the rules because of what could  
13 happen if anyone happened to catch you out, whatever you  
14 were doing.

15 Q. Did you tell your parents at any time about what you  
16 were suffering at school?


17 A. I did mention one or two things at the very beginning  
18 from time to time because I was quite shocked at what  
19 was happening, but in general my father's general  
20 attitude was -- it was always my father involved, not my  
21 mother, my father ran everything -- that as far as he --  
22 it sounded to him like it was just public school and  
23 therefore I should grit my teeth and get on with it. He  
24 didn't really see what I was saying because his  
25 understandings of public school -- or private schools

1           because it was never a public school -- his  
2           understanding was what he had read from Boys' Own Paper  
3           stories when he was at school and also from being in  
4           an English grammar school, which was far more civilised,  
5           so that coloured everything I said to him.

6           Q.   What about Brother **MNS**   Was he somebody that you ever  
7           told about what was happening to you?

8           A.   No, not as such.  We never really -- we never really had  
9           to speak to someone like Brother **MNS** because he just  
10          knew, he -- and you weren't going to burden him with it  
11          because he had enough problems of his own.  So it was  
12          just -- you were grateful that he was there  
13          occasionally.  It was sort of a very subtle thing  
14          because he never taught anything, he never said  
15          anything, he never gave us wise advice or anything of  
16          that nature, it was simply Brother **MNS** was there.

17          Q.   Do you think he knew about the bullying and the  
18          punishments?

19          A.     
20          I think there is no doubt about it: he knew exactly what  
21          was going on.

22          Q.   How was Brother **MNS** treated by other monks?

23          A.   It is hard to say.  In public he was treated politely,  
24          shall we say.  There are levels of entry into  
25          a monastery and he was at the lower level of lay

1 brother. Therefore he was of a lower rank or standing  
2 than the priests, what they called choir monks. The lay  
3 brothers were treated like servants, so in that sense  
4 basically he was just -- he was the one who swept the  
5 leaves up and they left him alone. But I got the slight  
6 impression he was treated as a bit of a simpleton  
7 because he was of [REDACTED] I believe is the  
8 term they use now. [REDACTED] Everybody knew  
9 that anyone like that was bound to be a simpleton  
10 because that was the way it was.

11 Q. You mention in your statement he may have been ridiculed  
12 by other staff.

13 A. He was certainly ridiculed by some of the other pupils  
14 who treated him as an idiot, I don't know whether the  
15 staff -- I never -- it wasn't so much the staff, it was  
16 the pupils who ridiculed him, not the staff, that  
17 would -- I never heard him slagged off by the teachers  
18 because they wouldn't have thought about him.

19 Q. I see. There came a time when you left Fort Augustus,  
20 I think when you were 15.

21 A. Yes, I was -- I left in the June of 1965, so I left  
22 a couple of months before my 16th birthday.

23 Q. You went on to a school in Bath, I think.

24 A. Yes, King Edward's School in Bath.

25 Q. When you arrived at that school, what were your

1 thoughts? Did you make any comparison with that and  
2 your experience at Fort Augustus?

3 A. Within a couple of hours of arriving at King Edward's  
4 School in Bath, which is a day school -- I was in  
5 the sixth form, which made life a little bit easier.  
6 All schools in England with sixth forms are a bit sort  
7 of easier than the rest of the school.

8 My first thoughts were literally, "My heavens, how  
9 civilised this place is", and I was struck by the  
10 politeness of the staff towards pupils. I was struck by  
11 the general atmosphere. The people weren't walking  
12 around in fear. They weren't walking around -- there  
13 was no overt bullying or rudeness, it was just a polite  
14 place to be. If King Edward's School was like that,  
15 Churcher's College in Petersfield, where I went the  
16 following year, was even more so, it was even more  
17 polite.

18 Q. You tell us that after leaving school you worked in  
19 a local bank for a while.

20 A. That's right I worked for Barclays Bank in Petersfield,  
21 which was the nearest big town to where my parents lived  
22 in Hampshire.

23 Q. Did you then go on to take up a position in a merchant  
24 bank in London?

25 A. Yes after ten months in Barclays it was fairly obvious

1 I wasn't going to get on in Barclays and Barclays didn't  
2 really want me either. I resigned and moved into  
3 a position with Kleinwort Benson Limited, a merchant  
4 bank in London.

5 Q. I think after some time you were in the position of  
6 chief accountant there.

7 A. No, not there. I left -- banking didn't suit me and for  
8 one reason or another I managed to get out of that and  
9 I went into the regular army to attempt to get  
10 a commission, which didn't work. But I wasn't really  
11 trying to get a commission, I didn't think I was going  
12 to, but it gave me a wonderful excuse to get out of the  
13 banking system without causing rows in the family.

14 I then took up a job with a firm called the Law  
15 Debenture Corporation, which was a firm I had never  
16 heard of. It was a tiny little outfit, it had only 17  
17 people, and it worked in the City of London. It was at  
18 that firm I eventually ended up as their chief  
19 accountant having spent quite a few years with them.

20 Q. Did you then go on to set up your own accountancy  
21 business?

22 A. Yes, I left Law Debenture -- there was a bit of a slight  
23 problem, I had to be a whistleblower. My immediate boss  
24 the company secretary basically decided that bottle was  
25 a good thing to turn to and so was the director's

1 secretary, unfortunately, so I had to report both to the  
2 managing director because that was part of my job, but  
3 it meant I wasn't a very convenient employee. So  
4 although I was promised I could stay as long as  
5 I wanted, in practical terms I had to leave.

6 So I went and joined Touche Remnant, a firm of  
7 investment managers, and I was their assistant company  
8 secretary through a number of trusts and then I went on  
9 to Gartmore, in a similar position, except I was company  
10 secretary to a number of investment trusts. When that  
11 came to an end in 1989, just before the children were  
12 born, there wasn't much work going on around -- I had  
13 been blacklisted in the City of London, I had noticed  
14 that, I wasn't going to get a job in my own field, that  
15 was fairly clear, and I had no other choice and  
16 I started my own accountancy practice.

17 Q. I think, when you were around 20 years old, you joined  
18 the Territorial Army and that was something you became  
19 involved in over a number of years.

20 A. Yes, I joined the Green Jackets in January 1970. The  
21 fact that that was successful and I enjoyed it  
22 encouraged me to apply for a regular army commission,  
23 which led to my joining regular army, and when I came  
24 back out of the regulars, and I went back into the TA,  
25 I rejoined the Green Jackets TA, and the success I had

1           there encouraged me, amongst other things, to start --  
2           to start my own business eventually, but it encouraged  
3           me with my civilian career, and I was able to start  
4           achieving.

5       Q.   You tell us that you married and had twin daughters.

6       A.   That's right.  I married in 1984, and our daughters took  
7           a long time to arrive, but in 1990, two daughters  
8           arrived for us.

9       Q.   I think subsequently you separated and you mention that  
10          your daughters have gone on to both have successful  
11          careers themselves.

12      A.   Yes, the separation came in 2000 and the children were  
13          then nine.  I was then effectively a sort of arm's  
14          length parent, guiding them through their schools, and  
15          they have now got through all of that, and they both  
16          have, as far as I can see, fairly well-settled careers.

17      Q.   How often do you think about your time at Fort Augustus?

18      A.   I left 55 years ago and I think you can count on the  
19          fingers of one hand the number of days when I am not at  
20          some point in the day considering some aspect of  
21          Fort Augustus and how I could have done something else  
22          about it if I had -- in some way or another.  It is  
23          something which I can hardly ever get rid of.  I see  
24          reminders of it all too often, and even now I cannot  
25          help thinking that there was something maybe I could



1           have done or should have done to make life a bit easier,  
2           but I can't.

3           Q. I think you say when you think of this you then remember  
4           you were just a child at the time.

5           A. Yes, I have to. It is hard to remember because you grow  
6           up and don't really see yourself switching through the  
7           stages, but I was a pre-pubertal child at  
8           Fort Augustus -- I didn't go through puberty until the  
9           last term I was there, so in real terms I was very much  
10          a small child. St Paul says, "When I was a child,  
11          I thought as a child and spoke as a child", and it is  
12          absolutely true there was nothing I could have done as  
13          a child.

14          Q. In terms of the impact your time in the school has had  
15          on you, you say it affected your self-esteem?

16          A. Totally, because I had no self-esteem when I left  
17          Fort Augustus. I was told I was a failure. I was told  
18          I was going to fail at everything. I was even persuaded  
19          academically I wasn't going to succeed, even though that  
20          was an absolute lie. Because I will, just briefly:  
21          I sat O-levels for the first time and out of eight  
22          subjects I only got three O-levels and I was told I was  
23          a failure. But I was only 14 when I sat those  
24          O-levels --

25          Q. Who told you that?

1 A. [REDACTED] MFF [REDACTED] at the time. I was only  
2 14 and I got 3 O-levels when I was 14 years old, not 16,  
3 which was actually quite a success. Had I been told  
4 I was successful but to keep on and get some more,  
5 I would have been encouraged but I was told the other  
6 way round, so I was actually discouraged and eventually  
7 I got fed up with school altogether.

8 But in terms of self-esteem it was when I went into  
9 the TA and I found people who, first of all, welcomed  
10 me, I was given the fellowship. Secondly, I started to  
11 realise there were things I could be good at. It sounds  
12 silly, but I didn't have to stop thinking I was useless,  
13 I was actually quite good at some things, I wasn't good  
14 at everything, but I was good at some things, and  
15 therefore I got my self-esteem back through the  
16 military.

17 Q. Something else you say in relation to impact is that it  
18 has made it difficult for you to make friends.

19 A. Yes, I don't know how far -- to be fair, I don't really  
20 know to what degree Fort Augustus was the cause of that  
21 or to what degree I seem to have been afflicted by  
22 Asperger's to some degree. One of the problems with  
23 that is you have difficulty making friends. It  
24 certainly didn't make it easier for me at Fort Augustus  
25 not knowing how to make friends. The army again helped

1 me to do that, they helped me fit in. I could do what  
2 I had to do in the army and relax knowing everything  
3 else was running along straight lines and I found myself  
4 making friends without realising it.

5 Q. One thing -- and you have touched on this already, Sean,  
6 just there -- I know is something you want to get across  
7 to the inquiry is the constant fear that something might  
8 happen. Can you explain that just a little bit?

9 A. Yes, the pressure of -- it wasn't what they did to you  
10 at Fort Augustus. The penalties were there, but they  
11 happened often enough to know that they could happen at  
12 any time for any reason. When you are in that sort of  
13 situation, you don't want any confrontation because  
14 confrontations lead to damage and so you try and keep  
15 all confrontations at arm's length, and it makes it  
16 difficult to initiate a conversation with anybody. If  
17 there is anything in the slightest bit confrontational  
18 to talk about, because you are not -- you can imagine  
19 trying to run a business when you have to tell staff  
20 what to do or correct what they are doing or deal with  
21 clients and clients aren't the easiest people in  
22 the world to deal with sometimes. I had to constantly  
23 try and juggle these things without actually doing  
24 anything confrontational, which can't have helped, to  
25 put it that way. But you feel it the whole time, this

1 worry that you can't just get on and live your life. It  
2 is easier now because I am retired and I don't have to  
3 worry about half these things, but every now and again  
4 you think, "What is going to happen?"

5 Q. You tell us in paragraph 96 that you want an open and  
6 formal apology for what happened at Fort Augustus.

7 A. Yes. The apologies that have come forward so far have  
8 been weasel words and not said -- they have not really  
9 admitted to anything. They have in fact almost not  
10 admitted to anything in the first place; they have just  
11 apologised for what might have happened and maybe if it  
12 did happen then we are sorry, but that means nothing.

13 Under the rules Catholic Church themselves live by,  
14 if you want forgives for an offence, you have first of  
15 all have to make an absolutely open statement of guilt,  
16 and that means a detailed statement of what it was you  
17 actually did that was wrong and, having done that, you  
18 then have to make a genuine act of contrition to  
19 genuinely say sorry in a way you mean it. The church  
20 itself says if you don't do that, then no matter  
21 a priest might say in the confessional, your sins are  
22 not forgiven. Regardless of what you have said and what  
23 they have said, if you haven't done it correctly, then  
24 the whole thing is a waste of time.

25 Q. In particular you say you wanted admission there wasn't

1 a proper diet, there was overuse of corporal punishment  
2 and the education was substandard.

3 A. Yes, and I want them to admit they knew or should have  
4 known and that is what has caused harm.

5 Q. I think you went back to Fort Augustus in around 1980;  
6 is that right?

7 A. That's right I had a -- I used to have a motorbike and  
8 I decide I would take it on a long run, a long run for  
9 that machine, but never mind. Because I happened to  
10 know the landscape, I drove up to Fort Augustus,  
11 Inverness, Fort Augustus, Drumnadrochit, Fort Augustus,  
12 which is a nice enough part of the world, and I went  
13 into the Abbey grounds, the church, just to sort of see  
14 what had been done to it, but also I wanted to prove it  
15 couldn't hurt me again.

16 Q. When you went there did you see any of the monks who had  
17 taught you at the school?

18 A. Yes, I saw -- I was recognised by Father **MFG**  
19 **MFG** who invited me to lunch on that Sunday, which was  
20 a bit -- I didn't feel I could refuse, to be polite. It  
21 was a bit embarrassing because it was a bit difficult --  
22 I was just being polite, I didn't want to say anything,  
23 I wasn't going to start a row about it.

24 Q. Did you also see Father **MKT**

25 A. I did, yes, after lunch they all met for coffee in

1 the sort of living room.

2 Q. Did you raise any of your concerns about your time in  
3 the school with them on that visit?

4 A. No, because when he saw me his face went white and he  
5 was waiting for me to say something.

6 Q. Father [REDACTED] MKT

7 A. Father [REDACTED] MKT I decided the cruellest thing I could  
8 do would be to say nothing, so I just turned my back on  
9 him and left him wondering if I was going to say  
10 something.

11 Q. Did you speak to the police in about 2012?

12 A. Yes, it was suggested through the Corbie website and  
13 through my own group that we could go to the police.  
14 I had assumed that -- for two reasons: first of all,  
15 I would have thought that the -- what is it called, gone  
16 on too long?

17 LADY SMITH: Time bar.

18 A. Time bar. Thank you, my Lady.

19 I thought it would be time-barred anyway and the  
20 other reason was the people who I really had complaints  
21 about were all dead, so I couldn't see any point. But  
22 then in some of the discussions that had been started,  
23 one of the comments was: well, nobody else ever  
24 complained about this, so why are you complaining?  
25 I decided if I put in a report to the police, as others

1 were doing, then at least nobody could say, "Well,  
2 nobody else has ever said this", because it would be on  
3 record.

4 So I gave a statement to the police, they came --  
5 the local police interviewed me on behalf of  
6 Police Scotland, and I believe my report was  
7 submitted -- my statement was submitted and naturally  
8 they came back and said they couldn't take it any  
9 further because everyone was -- they were all dead.

10 MS MacLEOD: In particular, had you told them about the  
11 physical abuse by Fathers [REDACTED] MFE and

12 [REDACTED] MFF

13 A. Yes, very much so.

14 Q. Something you say sat paragraph 10 is that you were  
15 aware of allegations of abuse when you were at  
16 Fort Augustus and the Vatican covering it up?

17 A. Yes, there was a monk was sent -- I can't remember which  
18 one was which now because they [REDACTED]

19 [REDACTED]  
20 [REDACTED] There was [REDACTED] and

21 [REDACTED] as they were known in the monastery.

22 One of them had been on parish duties in Glasgow,  
23 I believe, and the story was -- this is what we were  
24 told, that has the word that went around the school --  
25 that he had been returned to Fort Augustus because he

1 had shown too much of an interest in little girls and  
2 that was what the whole village knew about. How true  
3 that was -- of course, it was just gossip, but shortly  
4 after coming down to England, when we were in Bath, the  
5 Vatican actually admitted that they had given orders to  
6 cover up such offences.

7 Q. How did you become aware of that?

8 A. It was in the press, in the Catholic Herald Tribune, or  
9 whatever they call it. The Catholic newspaper actually  
10 said that they were forced to admit at that point they  
11 had told people like Fort Augustus to keep quiet about  
12 these things and cover up the abuses. Why nothing was  
13 done about it at that time, I do not know, but it was  
14 open, there was no secret about it, and that is when  
15 I found out about it.

16 Q. Something else you tell us in your statement is about  
17 Dom Yeo. You say that he -- you discuss him in relation  
18 to Father Francis More. Could you tell me about that?

19 A. Yes, I saw a television article where he was  
20 interviewed, and he said that he had sent Francis More  
21 to Fort Augustus despite the fact he knew he was  
22 a paedophile, a self-confessed paedophile. One of  
23 the things he said was because he thought he would find  
24 a circle of support there.

25 Q. What are your views on that?



1 A. I think he probably did find a circle of support there  
2 but not quite the support we were supposed to think.  
3 There were other paedophiles there, quite possibly, and  
4 Fort Augustus was being used as a dustbin.

5 Q. What are your views on that approach if that was the  
6 approach taken?

7 A. I think it is totally wrong. It should have been -- if  
8 he had been -- if he was offending in that way then the  
9 police should have been informed and it should have been  
10 dealt with through the civil courts.

11 Q. You mention Jimmy Savile in your statement and that you  
12 are aware he may have attended the school.

13 A. There was a big fuss about it when Jimmy Savile first  
14 came to the headlines. Somebody had claimed on the  
15 Corbie website he had visited Fort Augustus. There had  
16 been denial he had ever been anywhere near  
17 Fort Augustus, although his house was only a few miles  
18 down the road apparently, but there was a lot of talk  
19 backwards and forwards about whether he was involved  
20 because of what he had done.

21 Q. When was this?

22 A. I don't know when he was supposed to have visited  
23 Fort Augustus but it would have quite a while after  
24 I left and quite a while before the school shut, so  
25 I imagine in the 1980s --

- 1 Q. When was the discussion?
- 2 A. The discussion would have been in the early 2000s, so  
3 2005 or 2006, around that time. That is when the Corbie  
4 discussion group was really on fire.
- 5 Q. Is there a particular photograph that you saw in  
6 connection --
- 7 A. Somebody published -- I have never been able to find it  
8 since, but I can tell you I saw it published on screen.  
9 I looked at it on screen because it had been published  
10 on the Corbie website and it showed quite clearly  
11 Jimmy Savile sitting in the school library surrounded by  
12 three or four or five hero-worshipping schoolboys.
- 13 Q. Did you recognise any the boys?
- 14 A. No, it was after my time. The timing would have the  
15 mid 1970s or late 1970s. I left in 1967 so I wouldn't  
16 have recognised anybody there.
- 17 Q. Towards the end of your statement you set out some  
18 lessons that you think could be learned. You express  
19 that.
- 20 "When a child is at school, they don't know if what  
21 is going on is right or wrong."
- 22 A. No. They rely upon the school to tell them.
- 23 Q. You mention that some people go into teaching for the  
24 wrong reasons.
- 25 A. Yes, there are those who are attracted to children for

1 the wrong reasons and therefore find teaching  
2 an attractive profession. I don't know what percentage,  
3 but there are a large number of teachers -- according to  
4 OFSTED about a third -- who go into teaching because  
5 that is the only job they can get that will keep them  
6 out of the rain. They have degrees and there is always  
7 a shortage of teachers and they don't want to be there,  
8 they don't actually like children, they begrudge giving  
9 their time up. Again, they are not really the sort of  
10 people you want to have teaching.

11 It needs to be recognised that if you have teachers  
12 you have to have them wanting to teach for the right  
13 reasons, not the wrong reasons, and because you are  
14 dealing with individual teachers, you are never going to  
15 find out who the wrong people are unless they get  
16 convicted of something because until they have been  
17 convicted, they don't appear in any search programme;  
18 you can have as many DBS systems as you want.

19 Q. I think you suggest there should be at least two adults  
20 in charge of a class of children.

21 A. My experience is simply if you have one adult, then they  
22 can do what they like; if you have two, they can only do  
23 what the other adult likes and therefore they are going  
24 to be a lot more careful. I was, for a couple of days,  
25 a classroom assistant myself and I was absolutely

1           staggered at how polite these teachers were to the  
2           children in this classroom compared to even in  
3           King Edward's and Churcher's, the attitude of the  
4           teacher to the pupil, and these -- I had to think  
5           afterwards how much of that was down to the fact they  
6           had another adult in the room, if anything -- it had  
7           benefits to the teachers, of course, because the kids in  
8           the class can't accuse the teacher of improper behaviour  
9           if there is another adult to give witness. That rather  
10          scuppers that plan, so it protects both, but to a large  
11          degree it does protect child because, for want of  
12          a better word, paedophile -- but it covers anyone who  
13          wants to use a child for their own benefit. It is very  
14          opportunistic and it is not opportune if you have  
15          somebody else watching.

16        Q. You go on to say that:

17                "You have to move on but you can't move on until you  
18                learn from what went wrong."

19        A. That's right. We all know this. You have to be able to  
20                correct a problem, otherwise the problem still exists.

21        Q. What you say is that:

22                "Otherwise you end up with new allegations coming to  
23                light and a new inquiry years from now."

24        A. Yes, you can have an inquiry and if nothing ever happens  
25                to it, then again in a few years there will be yet

1 another inquiry because these abuses are happening as we  
2 talk. My own children were abused appallingly at  
3 school -- that was at their primary school, 24 or  
4 25 years ago -- but there is no reason to think life has  
5 changed or people have changed. There was no huge  
6 inquiry then, nothing to change the way teachers run  
7 schools. Children are going to suffer until something  
8 major is done, done to recognise what is actually  
9 happening and what is going wrong in the first place.

10 MS MacLEOD: Thank you, Sean. I don't have any further  
11 questions for you but I understand there is something  
12 you would look like to say.

13 A. Yes, for the sake of a sentence or two. When I was at  
14 Fort Augustus there was a hymn we used to sing in Mass  
15 in church from time to time, the refrain of which was  
16 something like:

17 "Jesus Lord. I cry for mercy. Let me not implore  
18 in vain."

19 At Fort Augustus, we implored in vain because there  
20 was no mercy. Thank you very much.

21 MS MacLEOD: Thank you very much, Sean.

22 My Lady, I'm not aware of any other questions for  
23 Sean.

24 LADY SMITH: Are there any outstanding applications for  
25 questions for Sean? No.



1 DES VINCENT AUSTIN (affirmed)

2 LADY SMITH: Des, please do sit down and make yourself  
3 comfortable. Des, the red light on the microphone tells  
4 you that it is switched on now and should pick up your  
5 voice comfortably, if you stay in a good position for  
6 it, please. I see you have brought -- are these notes  
7 of your own you might want to refer to?

8 A. Yes, I have.

9 LADY SMITH: That is fine. Feel free to use them if it is  
10 of assistance to you. The red file, Ms MacLeod will  
11 explain that to you. I will hand over to her now.

12 Ms MacLeod.

13 Questions from MS MacLEOD

14 MS MacLEOD: Good afternoon, Des.

15 A. Good afternoon.

16 Q. Are you Desmond Vincent Austin?

17 A. I am.

18 Q. Were you born on [REDACTED] 1945?

19 A. That is correct.

20 Q. Are you now 74 years old?

21 A. That's right.

22 Q. You have provided a statement for the inquiry, and there  
23 is a copy of that in the folder in front of you. I will  
24 give the reference for the transcript: WIT.001.002.3034.

25 A. That is correct.

- 1 Q. If I can ask you to look at the final page of that  
2 statement.
- 3 A. Yes.
- 4 Q. Have you signed the statement?
- 5 A. I have, yes.
- 6 Q. In the final paragraph do you say:  
7 "I have no objection to my witness statement being  
8 published as part of the evidence to the inquiry"?  
9 Do you see that?
- 10 A. I do, yes.
- 11 Q. Do you go on to say:  
12 "I believe the facts stated in the witness statement  
13 are true"?  
14 A. That is right.
- 15 Q. To begin with, Des, you tell us a little bit about your  
16 family background and in particular you tell us you were  
17 born in Glasgow?
- 18 A. That is correct, yes.
- 19 Q. And you had a brother who was four years older than you?
- 20 A. That's right.
- 21 Q. And a sister who was five years older?
- 22 A. Five years older.
- 23 Q. I think you say you were brought up in a Catholic  
24 household.
- 25 A. Very much so, yes.



1 Q. And to begin with did you attend a Catholic primary  
2 school in Glasgow?

3 A. I did, I think it was Lourdes Primary School.

4 Q. And did you have some health issues as a child?

5 A. I did, yes, I had various: pneumonia, scarlet fever, but  
6 then I had a serious bone disease, osteomyelitis, when  
7 I was nine, and --

8 Q. Were you operated on?

9 A. Yes, I was, yes.

10 Q. And was it after that that the decision was taken that  
11 you would go to boarding school?

12 A. Yes, my mother thought it would be good for my health to  
13 go to the east coast of Scotland.

14 Q. You went to Carlekemp Priory School in North Berwick?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. How old were you when you went to Carlekemp?

17 A. Ten and a half.

18 Q. And what is your first recollection of the school? Do  
19 you remember arriving there?

20 A. I don't remember -- I remember the first evening being  
21 if the wash room with, you know, a large number of boys,  
22 which I found quite difficult, because I had never been  
23 to camp, never been away from home at all, so that was  
24 different, but it was -- I'm surprised how little  
25 I remember in detail about the school. It was quite

1 a while ago.

2 Q. Do you remember roughly how many boys were in Carlekemp?

3 A. At the time I left I think there were about 65.

4 Q. And what were the sleeping arrangements?

5 A. We were in dormitories. Again, my recollection of where

6 everything is in the building is very bad, but it was

7 always a dormitory, yes, with about twenty -- possibly

8 15 or 20 pupils.

9 Q. You mention also the study hall.

10 A. Yes. My main recollection of that is just every week

11 being forced to write a letter home with your marks you

12 achieved that week, but again that is -- yes.

13 Q. Would you be okay if I put a photograph on the screen

14 for you?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. It is at WIT.003.001.4732. It will come on the screen.

17 (Pause)

18 Do you recognise what we see there?

19 A. Yes, that is familiar, yes.

20 Q. Is that the study hall?

21 A. Yes, yes.

22 Q. Who was the [REDACTED] at Carlekemp during your time?

23 A. Father [REDACTED] MEX [REDACTED]

24 Q. What was he like?

25 A. I actually found him all right. I didn't have any

1 issues with him. And I actually went to visit him in  
2 hospital when he was ill. He supported Third Lanark, as  
3 a football team, so it gave him a certain normality with  
4 the boys, I suppose, reading out the football results on  
5 a Saturday night was quite interesting.

6 Q. Who were the other monks you remember from Carlekemp?

7 A. Father [REDACTED] MEZ [REDACTED] he was my [REDACTED] teacher.

8 [REDACTED] MEW [REDACTED] we called him [REDACTED] Aidan Duggan,

9 Mr [REDACTED] MFB [REDACTED] the [REDACTED] teacher.

10 Q. What was --

11 A. Those were the main ones, I think.

12 Q. Were there also some lay teachers and a matron?

13 A. Yes, not that many. We had a couple of dancing teachers  
14 who came along, and ... yes.

15 Q. What was Aidan Duggan's role at Carlekemp while you were  
16 there?

17 A. I don't remember having that many dealings with him in  
18 class actually, strangely, because I was taught French,  
19 I am pretty sure, by --

20 Q. Is he somebody who arrived while you were at the school?

21 A. I arrived in 1955. I think he did, too. I think he  
22 arrived about the same time. The main thing I remember  
23 about him was reading us ghost stories in the dormitory  
24 in the evening.

25 Q. What do you remember about that?

- 1       A. Well, I haven't got bad memories, as I know some boys  
2       have, of that. I just remembered it as, I suppose,  
3       a fairly pleasant routine.
- 4       Q. How did you find the teaching at Carlekemp?
- 5       A. How did I find it? I did quite well in exams so  
6       I was -- I kept out of trouble mainly, and I did what  
7       was expected of me and expected by my parents, to keep  
8       them happy, because I knew they had spent a lot of money  
9       sending me to the school, so ... but we didn't --  
10      looking back, we didn't -- the study wasn't brilliant.  
11      We didn't do much science. It seemed to be very much  
12      language, religious knowledge, English, arithmetic  
13      based.
- 14      Q. Were you punished or disciplined during your time at  
15      Carlekemp?
- 16      A. I was but my memories of that are not great, certainly  
17      not as clear as they are at Fort Augustus.
- 18      Q. Do you remember if there was somebody who was in charge  
19      of discipline at Carlekemp or who arranged the  
20      discipline?
- 21      A. No, my memories of that are not good. I don't  
22      particularly remember the headmaster being the one who  
23      was in charge of discipline. No, I can't really be  
24      specific about that.
- 25      Q. I think you mention in your statement that you recall

1           being sent to a Mr [REDACTED] MFB for punishment on one  
2           occasion.

3           A. Yes. I have found that very odd -- and this is more in  
4           hindsight -- having received allegations that he may  
5           have been a sexual abuser.

6           Q. Is that an allegation you have heard from other people  
7           in more recent times?

8           A. Yes, yes. When I went into his room, dreading being  
9           punished, I held out my hands and he literally just  
10          stroked both hands with a strap. It was the first time  
11          I had ever been in his room, and looking back on that it  
12          appears suspicious to me.

13          Q. What about it appears suspicious to you? What makes it  
14          suspicious to you?

15          A. That he may have been grooming me.

16          Q. Father [REDACTED] MEZ who you have mentioned already,  
17          I think you said was the [REDACTED] teacher.

18          A. That's right, yes.

19          Q. You say in your statement:

20                 "He was a brilliant [REDACTED] but a brutal teacher."

21                 Could you elaborate on that for me?

22          A. Yes, when I started, I suppose, when I was 10 or 11,  
23          learning [REDACTED] -- my mother was a [REDACTED] teacher and my  
24          sister was a [REDACTED] teacher, so we had [REDACTED] in the house  
25          all the time, but I wouldn't have had the patience to be

1           taught by them at home, but I was quite looking forward  
2           to learning ██████████ at school. But his teaching methods  
3           were strange, to say the least. I soon -- I did exams,  
4           I did ██████████, but I gradually got  
5           disenamoured of -- because of his -- he would put a coin  
6           on your hand and ██████████ if the coin fell  
7           off, he would hit you with a ruler.

8           Q. Where would he hit you with a ruler?

9           A. On the back of the hand.

10          Q. Was it a wooden ruler?

11          A. Yes, I think so, yes.

12          Q. Would that be painful?

13          A. Yes, not excruciatingly painful but it certainly -- his  
14             manner left a lot to be desired and it was very much you  
15             were forced to practice at certain periods during the  
16             day, and everyone else was out playing games and so  
17             I sort of resented that a bit so I suppose I was  
18             reacting against the compulsion.

19          Q. Did you see if he treated other boys in a similar way?

20             Did you see other boys being hit with a ruler?

21          A. I didn't because they were individual lessons so

22             I didn't see what went on.

23          Q. You mention in your statement that there was a boy who  
24             was ridiculed for his accent; is that right?

25          A. Yes. Well, ridiculing was a matter of course at the --

1 I never found in either school much kindness among the  
2 teachers towards boys.

3 Q. So this particular boy, was it a teacher or a monk who  
4 ridiculed him?

5 A. It was the lay teacher, Mr MFB I think.

6 Q. Do you remember what kind of things were said?

7 A. He just -- he had a very Highland accent -- you are from  
8 the Highlands yourself and I think -- I just remember  
9 the word "film" and he pronounced it a certain way and  
10 they laughed at him. It is funny the little things you  
11 remember, but I thought that was cruel.

12 Q. At the end of the term at Carlekemp, was there  
13 a practice by which children were lined up?

14 A. Yes. You lined up in the positions of the class as you  
15 were at the start of the term, and of course if you had  
16 done badly you kept moving down one so it was  
17 an exercise in shaming people, I felt. If you had been  
18 kept back a year, either because of bad work or perhaps  
19 you weren't old enough to go to the next class, you  
20 started off at the top of the class even though you had  
21 no chance of finishing first. And I remember one boy  
22 just doing that and him gradually ending up right near  
23 the bottom, and somebody shouting, "Oh, bad luck", and  
24 one of the teachers shouting out, "Bad work more like  
25 it", and I just felt that was an unnecessary shaming.

1 Q. Do you know if there was a teacher or monk in particular  
2 who arranged this lining up?

3 A. The headmaster, I presume.

4 Q. There came a time, after I think around three years or  
5 so at Carlekemp, that you moved to Fort Augustus?

6 A. That is right, yes.

7 Q. What do you remember about finding out you were moving  
8 there or what were you told about the school in advance?

9 A. I suppose at first it was an exciting challenge but then  
10 as it came nearer to going there, you started to hear  
11 stories about what was going to happen to you when you  
12 got there --

13 Q. Who would tell you those stories?

14 A. Boys who had brothers at the senior school.

15 Q. What were the stories?

16 A. That you would get thrown into the moat which was round  
17 the Abbey, you would get your head flushed down toilet,  
18 and generally you would have a rough time.

19 Q. Do you recall arriving at the Abbey School for the first  
20 time?

21 A. I remember the trip because it was quite long: it was  
22 a train up to Spean Bridge and then you had a  
23 MacBrayne's bus and then a lot of singing going on.  
24 I suppose the older boys would sing things which were  
25 aimed at intimidating new boys, again what was going to



1           happen to them, I can't remember in exact detail but,  
2           yes, it was quite intimidating.

3           Q. I think you tell us that the school was divided into  
4           houses; is that right?

5           A. That's right, yes.

6           Q. Which house were you put into?

7           A. I was put in Lovat.

8           Q. What was the age range of boys at Fort Augustus?

9           A. It was 11 to 18.

10          Q. And did you form an impression of how many boys were  
11          there when you arrived?

12          A. I think because there were an average of 14 and 15 in  
13          a class, so I have worked out about 90 or 95.

14          Q. Who was the [REDACTED] at Fort Augustus?

15          A. [REDACTED] MFF

16          Q. [REDACTED]

17

18          A. [REDACTED]

19

20

21

22

23

24          Q. Is that something you knew at the time you were at the  
25          school or something you learned later?

1 A. I am not really sure actually if I knew the background  
2 of the monks. It is not something I took a lot of  
3 interest in. I know a lot about it now.

4 Q. Who was your housemaster?

5 A. MFE

6 Q. What did you understand his role to be in relation to  
7 you?

8 A. I'm not sure "look after me" is the correct expression.  
9 To ... make sure I behaved, I suppose, is a better way  
10 of putting it.

11 Q. I think you mention in your statement that he would  
12 carry out night patrols.

13 A. Yes. I think a lot of housemasters did that for the  
14 dormitories they were responsible for. I think he slept  
15 at the end of one of our dormitories.

16 Q. So what was the purpose of the night patrol?

17 A. To make sure we are sleeping, not talking, not getting  
18 up to mischief.

19 Q. What would happen if somebody was talking, for example?

20 A. I think -- I don't know how, but I managed to avoid ever  
21 actually getting beaten for anything that happened.

22 I have always been a good sleeper, so I probably slept  
23 through a lot of it. They would have been given the  
24 strap.

25 Q. Do you know if that happened there and then or if they

- 1 had to report somewhere?
- 2 A. Again my memory -- I know boys were taken down to  
3 certainly [REDACTED] MFF [REDACTED] room and beaten there from the  
4 dormitory. I didn't see that -- because I never went  
5 there, I didn't see that happening.
- 6 Q. You mention that mealtimes were served by  
7 Brother Adrian.
- 8 A. That's right.
- 9 Q. And he was somebody --
- 10 A. Aidan -- Adrian -- yes, sorry, it is Adrian, yes.
- 11 Q. I think you say you found him to be very pleasant.
- 12 A. Yes, we look forward to our food and Adrian and Rudolph,  
13 who helped him, were very pleasant and yes, we got on  
14 fine with them.
- 15 We got on fine with other brothers as well.
- 16 Brother [REDACTED] MNS [REDACTED] he was a pleasant an man. The Carruth  
17 brothers I found okay, Aloysius and Edmund Carruth from  
18 Glasgow, I didn't have any issues with them.
- 19 Q. Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] you tell us, as well as being your  
20 housemaster, he taught [REDACTED] in the  
21 school.
- 22 A. Yes, he did.
- 23 Q. Father [REDACTED] MFG [REDACTED] was he a housemaster?
- 24 A. He was the housemaster of Vaughan.
- 25 Q. Was he also a teacher?

- 1 A. Yes, he was. He never taught me anything, so  
2 I don't know what subjects he was involved with.
- 3 Q. We have mentioned Father Aidan Duggan before in the  
4 context of Carlekemp. Was he also somebody at  
5 Fort Augustus?
- 6 A. He was, yes.
- 7 Q. What was his role at Fort Augustus when you were there?
- 8 A. He taught me geography, I remember, for a while. He  
9 probably taught Latin and other subjects but the only  
10 subject I can ever remember him teaching me was  
11 geography -- because I remember I got 8% in one exam and  
12 I think it was the lowest I ever got.
- 13 Q. MEW is someone else you mention.
- 14 A. Yes, he taught me at Carlekemp, but I think it  
15 was mainly MFF actually, who taught me  
16 at Fort Augustus.
- 17 Q. Overall then at Fort Augustus how did you find the  
18 teaching? How would you describe the level of teaching?
- 19 A. In English, the teacher had no control over the class,  
20 and he was just made fun of, but I quite liked English.  
21 I managed to do well enough in the exams so I was quite  
22 happy.
- 23 I was -- MFF was actually  
24 a reasonable teacher I found, and we didn't -- I found  
25 it very poor that there was no -- I didn't have any

1 science teaching at all apart from, I think, my first  
2 year. We had no laboratory -- I think the they were  
3 building a new one, so everything would be done on  
4 a blackboard. They would draw a Bunsen burner and say,  
5 "This is a Bunsen burner, this is an experiment you  
6 would have done if we had a lab", so very little  
7 teaching in science.

8 The maths teacher wasn't -- he wasn't a qualified  
9 maths teacher, I think he -- I forget which subject he  
10 was, but he more or less admitted he was learning with  
11 us, teaching us calculus which he hadn't done before, so  
12 we were learning calculus from someone who never learned  
13 it himself.

14 Q. Something you say is:

15 "Every week the marks would get read out and if you  
16 hadn't done well you would have to go to **MFF**  
17 room that night."

18 A. I'm not sure they were actually read out but certainly  
19 on Monday assembly the names of boys who hadn't  
20 performed well enough in **MFF** opinion would  
21 know that in that evening they would have to go down to  
22 his room and be beaten.

23 Q. How did that operate then? Was that during the time  
24 that the boys were getting ready for bed? Were they in  
25 their pyjamas?

- 1 A. I think -- yes, I think we must have changed and then  
2 gone down in their pyjamas to his room.
- 3 Q. Did you ever have to go to his room because of low  
4 marks?
- 5 A. No, never.
- 6 Q. So what did you know at the time from the other boys?  
7 What was your understanding of what would happen to them  
8 if they had to go for punishment from **MFF**
- 9 A. They got -- they would have to get bent over and get  
10 beaten with his cane, which I never -- my beating was  
11 a -- leather strap. That was my form of beatings, so  
12 I never actually experienced being beaten by a cane.
- 13 Q. The boys who told you about being beaten by  
14 **MFF** did you see any injuries on them?
- 15 A. I didn't. No. I wasn't looking for them.
- 16 Q. You have mentioned there being hit with the strap  
17 yourself; who gave you that punishment?
- 18 A. It was always **MFE**
- 19 Q. And where did he give you the punishment, which part of  
20 the school?
- 21 A. It was in his own room, the housemaster's room.
- 22 Q. How many times do you think you went to have punishment  
23 in his room?
- 24 A. I think in my first term, that was in third year,  
25 probably ten times in the year.

- 1 Q. And how would that come about? What would you have to  
2 have done to be sent to his room for punishment?
- 3 A. It could have been talking in the lavatory, having an  
4 untidy -- the prefects had locker inspections, desk  
5 inspections, changing room inspections, and they were  
6 unannounced and if you happened to have an untidy locker  
7 then you would have to report to your housemaster.
- 8 Q. So the prefects could send you for punishment to the  
9 housemaster?
- 10 A. Yes.
- 11 Q. Could the housemaster himself also send you for  
12 punishment?
- 13 A. Yes, I was taken out from a [REDACTED] class  
14 with [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] which the room -- the classroom  
15 happened to be right next to his room. I had been  
16 sucking a sweet at the interval and I still hadn't  
17 finished it and he said to me, "Are you eating boy?" and  
18 I tried to explain I was finishing a sweet and he took  
19 me out and gave me, I think, three or four strokes on  
20 each hand and then I went back in and carried on with  
21 the lesson.
- 22 Q. That was a lesson he was taking?
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 Q. On that occasion you think you were hit three or four  
25 times; is that on each hand?

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. Would that be the normal amount of strokes?
- 3 A. I think three or four was average for misdemeanours like
- 4 having your hands in your pockets, talking in
- 5 the dormitory or talking in places where you shouldn't
- 6 be talking, and the prefects would just suddenly say --
- 7 they called it the stick. They would say, "Go for the
- 8 stick", and they would carry a notebook and write down
- 9 your name, and they would -- they would check up that
- 10 you had been for your punishment.
- 11 Q. So if a prefect saw you doing something they thought you
- 12 shouldn't undoing or saw your locker untidy they would
- 13 note your name down and ask you to go for punishment?
- 14 A. Yes.
- 15 Q. And then check later you had been for the punishment?
- 16 A. Yes.
- 17 Q. Who decided what the punishment was? Was that
- 18 the prefect or housemasters?
- 19 A. Housemaster.
- 20 Q. And did you then have to tell the housemaster why
- 21 you had been sent?
- 22 A. Yes.
- 23 Q. You said that you yourself weren't sent to **MFF**
- 24 for punishment as a result of marks being read out.
- 25 Were you ever sent to **MFF** for punishment?



- 1 A. Never.
- 2 Q. You tell us that your mother at a time befriended  
3 Aidan Duggan; can you tell me about that?
- 4 A. Yes, I don't know how it came about, it must have been  
5 when she was visiting the school at half term, but he  
6 utterly charmed her and she thought he was a lovely man.  
7 He came, certainly two possibly three times, and stayed  
8 over at my home in Glasgow when he was passing through.
- 9 Q. And were you at home on the occasions that --
- 10 A. Yes.
- 11 Q. -- Aidan Duggan stayed over?
- 12 A. Yes.
- 13 Q. How old were you at that time?
- 14 A. 14 or 15.
- 15 Q. What did you think of that at the time?
- 16 A. Not a lot. I didn't like him. I always tried to avoid  
17 him at school, so I certainly avoided him when he came  
18 to our house.
- 19 Q. Why didn't you like him?
- 20 A. I don't know. I just didn't warm to him as a person.  
21 As I say, some of the monks and the priests at the two  
22 schools were all right, they weren't all bad.
- 23 Q. Did you tell your mother you didn't like him?
- 24 A. I don't think so. No, I think -- sorry.
- 25 Q. In hindsight, do you have any thoughts looking back on

- 1           him coming to your house in that way?
- 2       A.   It is possible he may have been grooming me, trying to  
3           get into my good books, but I think I was -- I was  
4           a pretty surly teenager, so that was probably my defence  
5           actually.
- 6       Q.   Do you know if he went to visit other pupils' parents?
- 7       A.   I don't. I have no knowledge of that.
- 8       Q.   I think you mention in your statement that on the last  
9           occasion he stayed he told your mother that you should  
10          avoid contact with one of your classmates.
- 11      A.   That's right, yes.
- 12      Q.   What did he say?
- 13      A.   My master said that one boy was particularly ... sexual,  
14          that is how she put it, and that I shouldn't have any  
15          contact with him.
- 16      Q.   And did she tell you that is what Aidan Duggan had told  
17          her?
- 18      A.   Yes.
- 19      Q.   What did you make of that at the time?
- 20      A.   I knew the boy was going out with the matron's daughter,  
21          that was common knowledge at the school, but that was --  
22          I presume that is what he meant.
- 23      Q.   Were there any inspections of the school while you were  
24          there?
- 25      A.   I'm not sure there were actually. I certainly don't

1           remember anybody coming into the classroom while lessons  
2           were being held, no.

3           Q. You tell us in your statement that the prefects had  
4           fags.

5           A. Uh-huh.

6           Q. How did that work?

7           A. I can -- like I say, I was fortunate in going straight  
8           into third form. The fags were either always in  
9           the first form, possibly the second form. They could do  
10          whatever the prefects wanted them to, skivvies.

11          Q. I think that although you say you avoided that, you say  
12          it made it worse because you missed out on learning the  
13          school system.

14          A. I did say that. I think I got over that quite quickly  
15          though, and was relieved that I didn't have to go  
16          through the -- the first and second year experiences.

17          Q. Was there a period where you felt that prefects perhaps  
18          picked on you and a friend of yours?

19          A. Yes. My best friend at school, [REDACTED] we went up to  
20          third form and whereas from Carlekemp most of our -- all  
21          the other people in our class went into second form, we  
22          went a year ahead which was --

23          Q. Was that because of your academic results?

24          A. Yes, in the common entrance we had good results and  
25          I think there was a bit of envy perhaps from some of the

1           older boys that we were upstarts if you like, going  
2           halfway through the school and not going through the  
3           whole system.

4       Q. Did you think that that perhaps led to you being sent by  
5           the prefects for punishments more often than perhaps you  
6           should have been?

7       A. One in particular, but not necessarily the others. One  
8           picked on us certainly.

9       Q. Something you tell us is that you think the school  
10          taught you to be quite deceptive.

11      A. Oh, yes. Yes.

12      Q. Can you develop that for me?

13      A. It was just trying to avoid getting into trouble all the  
14          time, and you learned to be deceitful, which is not  
15          a trait I am particularly proud of. It would have been  
16          nice if I had learned other traits, really.

17                I mean, I think I mentioned one occasion I was sent  
18          by the prefect to get beaten for some -- I told him  
19          I had been and I hadn't been and I thought I can get  
20          away with this. Again, I'm not sure I did try it.  
21          Again, it was possibly too risky. But you were always  
22          looking over your shoulder and it wasn't a pleasant  
23          atmosphere.

24      Q. Something you tell us, Des, is that you say:

25                "I never saw the headmaster or the housemasters

- 1           doing any kind act in the time I was there."
- 2           A. That is true, yes.
- 3           Q. You describe the period after lunch as a crazy time.
- 4           Can you tell me what happened after lunch?
- 5           A. It was free period, so we would go upstairs, and the
- 6           billiards room would be open. We would go and play
- 7           table tennis, the television would perhaps be on,
- 8           especially if it was sport. The tuck shop would be
- 9           opened up and that was all within a very small area, but
- 10          also the housemaster's room was next to all of these.
- 11          At the same time as we were enjoying ourselves doing
- 12          things was the beatings time for MFE
- 13          Q. So would boys then be lined up outside his room while
- 14          other boys were enjoying themselves nearby?
- 15          A. Yes.
- 16          Q. Father MFC is someone you mention.
- 17          A. Yes. I don't have great memories of him, just one --
- 18          I know he had anger management issues, and one boy he
- 19          just did not get on with, and he hurled a duster -- told
- 20          him to get out of the classroom and it was a race as to
- 21          whether he could leave the room before the duster hit
- 22          him. But apart from that --
- 23          Q. Is that something you witnessed yourself?
- 24          A. Yes, I was in the class at the time, yes.
- 25          Q. Were you bullied at school?

1 A. A little bit at Carlekemp. Certainly in the third --  
2 and in my first year at Fort Augustus, partly because we  
3 were -- because considered upstarts and we shouldn't be  
4 in third form, but we actually got on very well with the  
5 people in our year, and that soon stopped. We had the  
6 advantage of having friends in our new class and also  
7 friends in the class below who had moved up from  
8 Carlekemp, so it stopped quite soon.

9 Q. Was Father MFG the housemaster of the  
10 other house?

11 A. That's right, yes.

12 Q. Did you have much contact with him?

13 A. No. No, only on the -- he took us for rugby  
14 occasionally. I had very little contact. I think in my  
15 last year when we had a study, his room was quite near  
16 our study, but that was it. So, yes, he took us for  
17 rugby sometimes.

18 Q. How did he interact with you in the rugby context?

19 A. Well, I remember one -- he used to like calling me  
20 "Jane", obviously Jane Austin. He didn't consider I was  
21 that good at rugby and I just remember he came -- he was  
22 quite solidly built and he just came charging towards me  
23 and I had to tackle him. That rings a bell.

24 I didn't find him a very pleasant man but I had very  
25 little -- the houses were very separated.

1 Q. Was that as part of the game he did that or outwith the  
2 game?

3 A. He probably stopped the game, yes.

4 Q. How old were you at that time?

5 A. 14. I just remember him having a dreadful temper.

6 Q. You mention there was a boy who had epilepsy and that he  
7 had a terrible time from staff and pupils.

8 A. Yes. I felt they were quite cruel to him. He had  
9 the -- I think he was at -- this is terrible. He was at  
10 Fort Augustus or Carlekemp, but he was -- I just felt it  
11 was -- he had fairly regular fits and I just felt there  
12 wasn't much consideration for his condition at all. He  
13 was treated quite cruelly.

14 Q. How did the monks treat him?

15 A. Again, I don't think there was much sympathy or  
16 encouragement for us to behave better to him.

17 Q. There was a boy you tell us who wet himself and had  
18 a dreadful time.

19 A. Yes, yes, he had an unfortunate name and that ... yes.

20 Q. So what happened to him? What would happen if he wet  
21 the bed?

22 A. He would just get insulted by the teachers and the boys  
23 would follow on from that.

24 Q. Was there any teacher in particular who was involved in  
25 that?

- 1 A. Not that I remember, no.
- 2 Q. Do you remember what was said to the boy by the  
3 teachers?
- 4 A. It was more the boys -- because the teachers just didn't  
5 support him. The boys took it out on him and they  
6 couldn't be blamed, they were just following the example  
7 or lack of support from the teachers, really. Any  
8 impediment or -- there was one boy, his nose dripped  
9 a lot and he was made fun of because of that. Maybe it  
10 happens in all schools but I felt at our school there  
11 was just no support from the teachers at all for anybody  
12 who had problems.
- 13 Q. Was there a boy who died during your time at the school?
- 14 A. Yes. There was, yes.
- 15 Q. Was that [REDACTED]
- 16 A. [REDACTED] yes.
- 17 Q. What did you know at the time about the circumstances of  
18 his death?
- 19 A. At the time we were just told that he was -- we had  
20 three-week holidays every three weeks and we -- in  
21 the older -- the older boys would go out in groups of  
22 three or whatever and they were allowed to wander --
- 23 Q. Was that for a day trip?
- 24 A. Yes, but the earlier classes were supervised and they  
25 would go out with a teacher. In his class -- I think



1           they were was first form, I am pretty sure they were --  
2           taken by Mr Calvert, who was my music teacher at the  
3           time. We just learned that he had slipped into  
4           Loch Ness and drowned. Because he was -- he was a very  
5           bright boy, this was made to be -- made out to be even  
6           more tragic, not that it matters what his academic  
7           ability was, but it was made out to be -- we were made  
8           to grieve even more because of that. But all we heard  
9           was that he slipped into Loch Ness.

10          Q. Do you know or remember if -- do you remember if there  
11           was any investigation at the time?

12          A. No, I don't, no.

13          Q. Do you remember if there was a funeral for him?

14          A. Yes. There must have been at the school, yes, because  
15           I think the grieving process lasted quite a while, yes.

16          Q. Do you know where he is buried?

17          A. I think he is buried at Fort Augustus. Yes, I am sure  
18           he is, yes.

19          Q. Do you recall anything in relation to Mr Calvert  
20           following on from that?

21          A. He left the following term.

22          Q. Did you understand that to be in any way related to the  
23           death?

24          A. I didn't -- I know now from records I have been looking  
25           at that he left the following term. I wasn't aware --

1 he was my music teacher but I think I had given up the  
2 piano by that stage because I found him a dreadful  
3 teacher. He was just -- yes, I was -- I am amazed now,  
4 looking back, that he was sent out supervising a class  
5 of, I don't know how many people, in the middle of  
6 winter in the Highlands --

7 Q. Why do you say that?

8 A. He didn't strike me as somebody who was competent to do  
9 that, had the experience, but this is very much in  
10 retrospect.

11 Q. I think you mention you have become aware since of  
12 reports that this boy, [REDACTED] was bullied.

13 A. Yes, yes, which -- somebody being very bright, I suppose  
14 they lay themselves open to being bullied. Yes, I have  
15 heard reports that he was bullied by boys --

16 Q. Is this report --

17 A. -- by boys that were in his year, yes.

18 Q. Did you report what was going on at Fort Augustus in  
19 relation to the beatings, for example? Did you report  
20 that to anybody at the time?

21 A. Nobody, no.

22 Q. I think you tell us at the time it was normal to you.

23 A. Yes. I mean I had no idea what was going on in other  
24 schools so, yes, we just accepted that as what happened  
25 in schools.

1 Q. Was there anybody you could have told if you had wanted  
2 to or had wanted to share a concern with somebody?

3 A. There was nobody that was pointed out to us that we  
4 could go to. There was no position of -- yes. No,  
5 nobody.

6 Q. There came a time, I think in around 1962, when you left  
7 the school.

8 A. Uh-huh.

9 Q. Is that right? And I think you tell us you went to  
10 Glasgow University --

11 A. That's right, yes.

12 Q. -- thereafter. Did you spend some time working in  
13 a bookmaker's and then became an apprentice chartered  
14 accountant?

15 A. That's right, yes.

16 Q. I think you then went into teaching for a short period.

17 A. Yes, yes.

18 Q. And then you went on to write a book about running --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- which I think took you into a career of running  
21 a running shop --

22 A. That's correct, yes.

23 Q. -- and you went on to open seven running shops in  
24 London?

25 A. Yes, that is right.

- 1 Q. Subsequently you sold that business.
- 2 A. In 2010, yes.
- 3 Q. You have been with your wife for over twenty years, you  
4 tell us.
- 5 A. That's correct, yes.
- 6 Q. How often do you think about your time at Carlekemp and  
7 Fort Augustus?
- 8 A. Not a lot really. From ... looking back now -- I went  
9 to teacher training college in 1967 to 1970, so I was  
10 teaching 1970 and 1971. Looking back, that is not that  
11 long from when I was at school. Looking at reports of  
12 what was happening still at Fort Augustus then, I just  
13 can't believe -- I presumed that when I left school that  
14 things had moved on, there would be no violence, we  
15 never -- the schools I was at, it never occurred to  
16 anybody to use corporal punishment, it just didn't  
17 exist. So yes, when I heard reports of boys in  
18 the 1970s, or even later, receiving brutal treatment,  
19 I find that amazing. But I didn't think of it, of the  
20 schools, really, until I discovered the old boys'  
21 website in 2001.
- 22 Q. We will come on to look at that shortly.
- 23 Something I think you are keen to point out, Des, is  
24 that you weren't miserable at school all the time.
- 25 A. No. By no means, no.

1 Q. And that you are not against boarding schools in  
2 principle?

3 A. No, I'm not. Perhaps 7 is too young to go over, but 10  
4 or 11, yes, I think it is -- you do learn things and  
5 living with your peers 24 hours a day can be beneficial.

6 Q. You have mentioned already that you think the school  
7 taught you to be deceptive and you mentioned that it  
8 taught you to be cunning.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And that it wasn't loving, caring environment?

11 A. Not at all, no.

12 Q. You say there was a constant fear of doing something  
13 wrong?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. You have mentioned this already when looking at the  
16 monks who were there, but you say that there were some  
17 good men at Fort Augustus?

18 A. Yes, there were, yes.

19 Q. Did you attend a school reunion in 1963?

20 A. No, in 2002.

21 Q. Sorry, 2002.

22 A. Yes, I did. Yes, I organised the reunion.

23 Q. And is that when you discovered the website?

24 A. No, I discovered that in 2001. And then that gave me  
25 access to old boys --

- 1 Q. You discovered -- is that the Corbie website that you  
2 discovered?
- 3 A. That's right, yes.
- 4 Q. You discovered that in 2001?
- 5 A. 2001, yes.
- 6 Q. And you went on then to arrange a reunion after that?
- 7 A. Yes, this is after I had posted a message on the forum  
8 saying what I thought about the school, and asking if  
9 any other pupils, former pupils, shared my views, just  
10 how they felt.
- 11 Q. So you discovered the Corbie website online and is that  
12 a website for old boys where they can share --
- 13 A. That's right.
- 14 Q. -- posts about the school.
- 15 A. Yes.
- 16 Q. Was that a public website the Corbie?
- 17 A. Yes, when it opened at first, it seemed -- looking back  
18 now, it seemed to be in the form of anybody could give  
19 their email address and post a comment, so it would be  
20 in -- in -- the names would all be up there and you  
21 could read what each person was saying.
- 22 Q. When you first went on the website I think you noticed  
23 that people weren't saying anything negative. Is that  
24 something you noticed?
- 25 A. Yes. Yes, I spotted that which was -- it was fine in

1           some ways. Pupils were making -- catching up with  
2           former pupils and had made friendships. I had nothing  
3           against that and I thought that was an excellent feature  
4           of the website. But it just -- I was surprised that it  
5           appeared that it had been an idyllic education at the  
6           two schools and that is not how I felt it was.

7           Q. Is that the background to your deciding to write the  
8           letter --

9           A. Yes.

10          Q. -- in 2001?

11          A. That is right, yes.

12          Q. We will look at that letter now. It is  
13           WIT.003.001.8244. It will come on the screen. You will  
14           notice that parts of that have been blacked out, Des.  
15           That is to remove addresses and those kinds of details.  
16           But do you see on the screen that letter?

17          A. I do, yes.

18          Q. Is that a letter that you uploaded on to the Corbie  
19           website?

20          A. Yes, I was trying to think this morning how it actually  
21           worked. I think I had to type it in, onto the website,  
22           and then that went out to -- I could choose who it went  
23           to but, it went to everybody on the website as far as  
24           I am aware, anybody who had an email address.

25          Q. We see there that it is dated 21 January 2001.

- 1 A. That is right, yes.
- 2 Q. So what was your purpose in writing this letter?
- 3 A. Just to express my dissatisfaction about certain aspects  
4 of the school: the harshness, the beatings, generally  
5 the bad behaviour by some of the teachers and the boys.
- 6 Q. I think you mention in your statement that as well as  
7 the positive things that were being said you felt  
8 compelled to highlight this because you wanted there to  
9 be a balance shown.
- 10 A. Yes. Yes.
- 11 Q. So if we look at the letter, it is addressed to, "Dear  
12 old boy/girl", and I think in the initial paragraph you  
13 introduce yourself and explain when you were at the  
14 school. In the second paragraph I think you go on to  
15 thank those who have set up the Corbie site; is that  
16 right?
- 17 A. That's right, yes.
- 18 Q. And if we go to the third paragraph you say:  
19 "Evil events in recent years have made us realise  
20 that society always need to be vigilant and not be  
21 overawed by professionals in positions of authority,  
22 especially if they are in charge of more vulnerable  
23 sections of the community ..."
- 24 A. Yes.
- 25 Q. And you go on in the final paragraph on that page to set



1 out your own recollections of the regime when you were  
2 at Fort Augustus. You say:

3 "I consider that the regime was one based on fear  
4 and bullying and where physical and mental cruelty to  
5 pupils were commonplace."

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Then if we go over the page, do you see that you then go  
8 on to set out some of your more detailed recollections  
9 in relation to the punishments?

10 A. Uh-huh.

11 Q. You mention the role of the prefects in that and  
12 reporting punishments. Then in the middle paragraph of  
13 the second page you go on to say:

14 "It would be wrong to give the impression that all  
15 my time spent at Carlekemp and Fort Augustus was  
16 miserable."

17 Then you go on to explain how you learned to cope  
18 and that there were good teachers at both schools. Then  
19 you mention sport in the next paragraph and explain  
20 that:

21 "[That] has always been an integral part of your  
22 life, but the sport I have been involved in since school  
23 is a world apart from the elitist macho attitude toward  
24 it at the Abbey. I remember gloves being forbidden on  
25 the hockey pitch, even if your hands were so cold you

1           couldn't feel your stick."

2           And in the final paragraph you give a bit of  
3           background about what you were doing at that time,  
4           running your running shop.

5           Then finally, over the page:

6           "[You] welcome any comments from former pupils or  
7           teachers, especially were people who were there during  
8           [your] own time, who agree or disagree with what my  
9           experience was of the school."

10          A.   Yes.

11          Q.   So in essence are you inviting people to come back to  
12              you with their own thoughts and their own recollections?

13          A.   Yes, I mean I -- I don't know what I was expecting.  
14              Maybe I wasn't expecting anything, so I was very open.

15          Q.   You mentioned that you think this was sent to all the  
16              people on forum. Do you have any idea of how many  
17              people that would have been?

18          A.   About 130.

19          Q.   Did a number of former pupils then contact you in  
20              response to this letter?

21          A.   They did, yes.

22          Q.   And were certain disclosures in relation to alleged  
23              abuse made to you in those responses?

24          A.   There were and I was very shocked because they were  
25              allegations that I wasn't aware of.

1 Q. Were some of those disclosures made to you by telephone  
2 and by personal email as well as in responses on the  
3 forum?

4 A. It was really all personal emails.

5 Q. So rather than responding on the forum were they  
6 replying to you personally by email?

7 A. (Witness nods).

8 Q. And --

9 A. I did have a confidential -- I was trying to get in  
10 touch with one former pupil because I know he had been  
11 abused, and to see if he would come forward, but on the  
12 whole it is -- a lot of it was done by emailing.

13 Q. And you have provided some of those emails to the  
14 inquiry?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. In those emails did former pupils make disclosures to  
17 you in relation to physical abuse?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Did they also make disclosures to you in relation to  
20 sexual abuse?

21 A. Yes, they did.

22 Q. Did they -- was this something that came as a surprise  
23 to you?

24 A. A complete surprise.

25 Q. What was your immediate response to that at the time?

- 1 A. I didn't know what to do really. I was landed with  
2 these emails and I wasn't quite sure how to handle it.  
3 So I rang up Michelle Elliott, who was head of Kidscape  
4 at the time, and I spoke to her. She said  
5 immediately -- I am going to give you a number at  
6 Scotland Yard and you ring up and tell them what you  
7 have told me. When I rang them they said, "There is  
8 absolutely nothing we can do unless the alleged victims  
9 come to us direct". I'm not sure, but I think it would  
10 be handled very differently now, but that was 2001.
- 11 Q. How quickly after you posted the letter in January 2001  
12 did these responses start coming into you?
- 13 A. Very quickly, I think, from the dates, yes.
- 14 Q. How many responses would you say roughly that you  
15 received at that time?
- 16 A. I don't know, 15 or so, yes.
- 17 Q. I think then in August 2001, so around seven months  
18 later, you wrote a letter to the people who had  
19 contacted you; is that right?
- 20 A. That's right, yes.
- 21 Q. Did you in that thank them for their response and also,  
22 in an anonymised way, set out some of the reports of  
23 abuse that had been passed to you?
- 24 A. Yes -- I am just looking here actually. Yes, I gave  
25 extracts from the emails.

1 Q. I will take you to the document. It is  
2 WIT.003.001.8302. It will come on the screen. This is  
3 a letter which looks to have been written by you on  
4 27 August 2001.

5 A. Yes. Yes, I have that.

6 Q. We will just wait for it to come on the screen as well.  
7 That is it showing on the screen now. Do you see there  
8 the date, 27 August 2001?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Do you recognise that as the letter you sent out?

11 A. I do, yes.

12 Q. So what was the purpose then of you sending this letter,  
13 Des?

14 A. To let the former pupils who had written to me know  
15 their experiences were shared.

16 Q. Was this a letter you sent to everyone on the forum  
17 again or was it limited to those who had responded to  
18 you?

19 A. It was limited to those who responded to me.

20 Q. Do we see there, looking at the first paragraph, you  
21 say:

22 "First of all, I must thank you for writing and  
23 I apologise for not replying earlier to some of your  
24 emails. I was somewhat stunned by how open you all were  
25 in relating your experiences to me and I wanted to be

1           sure I handled your responses in an appropriate way.

2           I have enclosed extracts from your letters. To protect  
3           anonymity, all names and date have been omitted. I have  
4           only sent this email to the old boys who replied to my  
5           original email sent in January and you expressed the  
6           same concerns about abuse and bullying that took place  
7           during their years in both schools."

8           A. Yes.

9           Q. Do we see then that if we look on to the second page of  
10          that and in the middle paragraph you say:

11                 "I hope the attached extracts from your email will,  
12                 at the very least, give some support to those of you who  
13                 had had very bad recollections of the two schools. You  
14                 were not imagining it. Your experiences were  
15                 unfortunately shared by many. I was very aware of the  
16                 mental and physical cruelty that took place during my  
17                 Benedictine schooling. The accusations of sexual abuse  
18                 however came as a surprise. This was not something  
19                 I had considered when I was at school and hoped had not  
20                 happened. This was naive."

21                 Do you then go on to say in the next paragraph that  
22                 you set out the extracts:

23                 "Replies to my mailings of about 130 old boys. The  
24                 period coughed by the emails is 1954 to 1991, shortly  
25                 before the closure of the school."

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. Do you then set out various extracts that you have taken  
3 of some of the emails that were sent to you?
- 4 A. Yes.
- 5 Q. I think you mention after the reunion you set up --  
6 first of all, looking at the reunion in 2002, can you  
7 tell me a little about that? Where did that take place?
- 8 A. It took place in Glasgow at the Holiday Inn. I wrote to  
9 the old boys that were around my year at school, either  
10 just ahead of it or just behind, to see if any of them  
11 wanted to meet up. There was no particular agenda and  
12 I think it ended up on the day with partners. It was  
13 a small group, only twelve people, twelve people, but it  
14 was interesting.
- 15 Q. I think you say that after that reunion things quietened  
16 down a little on the website.
- 17 A. They did. Yes. At that reunion I was -- again, things  
18 were revealed to me that I didn't know about.
- 19 Q. Was there discussion then at the reunion about --
- 20 A. Yes --
- 21 Q. -- your letter?
- 22 A. -- about Aidan Duggan in particular and his abuse of --  
23 abusive activities at Carlekemp in particular.
- 24 Q. What was revealed to you in that regard?
- 25 A. We mentioned the ghost stories being read to boys in the

1           dormitory. I didn't realise he had been interfering  
2           with boys under the bedclothes. I knew nothing about  
3           that. One old boy told me about it and explained that  
4           he didn't believe -- a classmate told him about it and  
5           he didn't believe it, but then one day he actually  
6           changed beds and the same thing happened to him, so then  
7           he did believe him.

8           Q. Did he say what happened to him?

9           A. "I was fondled by Aidan Duggan."

10          Q. In around 2005 did things start to get a little busier  
11          again in relation to people making contact with you,  
12          Des?

13          A. They did, yes. This was as a result of John Ellis,  
14          under the pseudonym of "Not a Dentist" posting on the  
15          school website asking for information about  
16          Aidan Duggan, and but not saying why.

17          Q. What was the response to that?

18          A. The response was quite mixed. There was a lot of  
19          suspicion amongst some old boys, wondering who is this  
20          chap and what is he doing on our website, and  
21          questioning what he was doing. And then when it was  
22          revealed that he was -- he alleged abuse against  
23          Aidan Duggan in Australia, then a lot of old boys became  
24          very defensive on behalf of Aidan Duggan, so it --  
25          because they never saw anything happen at the school,



1           therefore it couldn't have happened and until they get  
2           proof ... but it went beyond that and they were actually  
3           quite abusive of John Ellis.

4           Q. Was it revealed on the Corbie website that he was making  
5           allegations of abuse against Aidan Duggan?

6           A. I think it was, yes. Yes. He wanted to find out more  
7           information to see if it had happened at our schools.

8           Q. Those allegations that he was making, did you understand  
9           these to relate to something that happened in Australia?

10          A. Yes.

11          Q. You have mentioned the responses that came from some  
12          people to that which were in defence of Aidan Duggan?

13          A. Yes.

14          Q. Did those comments change or did the tenor of those  
15          comments change at a certain time?

16          A. They didn't change until I posted on the website the  
17          extracts of emails that I had originally sent to the  
18          selected former pupils and it changed after that. It  
19          made the defenders of Aidan Duggan and the regime, if  
20          you like, accept that -- they couldn't deny it any  
21          longer.

22          Q. So the letter you had sent out to those who had  
23          responded to you in 2001, you posted part of that on the  
24          Corbie website --

25          A. That's right, yes.

1 Q. -- in 2005? We don't need to go to that again but  
2 I will give the reference for the transcript:  
3 WIT.003.001.8343. That is your posting from 2005?  
4 A. Right.  
5 Q. A few years later, by 2009, you tell us there was  
6 another web forum set up?  
7 A. Yes, in the meantime the postings on the website got  
8 quite vicious at times, because it very much became two  
9 camps, and some abusive comments or postings were made.  
10 I understand the moderator decided that it had to stop  
11 and the way he eventually stopped it was by closing the  
12 forum.  
13 Q. When did that happen?  
14 A. I'm not -- I would guess 2007, but -- 2008, before  
15 Sean O'Donovan started his own website.  
16 Q. What was the nature then of the website started by  
17 Sean O'Donovan?  
18 A. It was for pupils who had had a bad time at the two  
19 schools and wanted to share their experiences.  
20 Q. Was this a more private forum?  
21 A. Yes, very much so. Yes, you had to be accepted on to  
22 it, yes.  
23 Q. Did you have any understanding of whether further  
24 disclosures or disclosures were made on that forum in  
25 relation to allegations of abuse at the school?

1 A. There were, yes.

2 Q. Are these posts that you saw yourself on the forum?

3 A. Yes, that I read on his forum, yes.

4 Q. Again did these posts relate to physical and sexual  
5 abuse allegations of boys at the school?

6 A. Yes, and in some cases the former pupils mentioned that  
7 they had been to the police and reported their  
8 allegations, [REDACTED]  
9 [REDACTED]

10 Q. As well as seeing some of the same people you had seen  
11 on Corbie comment on this, did you also see people  
12 commenting on this private forum for the first time --

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. -- and making disclosures of abuse?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. I think you say you were shocked by the reports of  
17 sexual abuse that you heard.

18 A. Yes, initially completely shocked, yes.

19 Q. And that hearing about this exacerbated your negative  
20 feelings about the school?

21 A. Yes, that is true to say, yes.

22 Q. One thing you say at paragraph 96 is that:  
23 "Those former pupils were describing severe physical  
24 beatings and that this may have led to [REDACTED] MFF  
25 leaving Fort Augustus."

- 1 A. That is right. I think in 1972 he beat three boys  
2 viciously. The local doctor, Dr Buchanan, had to be  
3 called in because one of the boys was so bad. He was  
4 relieved of his duties the next term. That was in 1972  
5 I am pretty sure.
- 6 Q. You also say that the posts described grooming by  
7 Aidan Duggan --
- 8 A. Sorry ...
- 9 Q. -- in paragraph 96 of your statement.
- 10 A. Yes -- sorry ...
- 11 Q. Page 20, the top of page 20.
- 12 A. Right, yes. This is on Sean O'Donovan's website, yes.
- 13 Q. Yes.
- 14 A. That's right, yes.
- 15 Q. Do you also say that the disclosed sexual abuse by  
16 Aidan Duggan, Father [REDACTED] MEZ and the [REDACTED]  
17 teacher, [REDACTED] MFH
- 18 A. Yes, who I didn't know at all.
- 19 Q. You tell us that you posted on the old boys' website  
20 about some of the topics that you had discussed at the  
21 2002 reunion. I think you have provided a copy of that  
22 to the inquiry which is entitled "Loincloths, Lavatories  
23 and Lashes"?
- 24 A. Yes, when I mention loincloths, it seems not many people  
25 seem to remember it. It may just have been that at

1 Carlekemp in the showers we were required to wear  
2 loincloths.

3 LADY SMITH: That would fit with some other evidence that we  
4 have heard.

5 A. Okay, so I'm not imagining it.

6 MS MacLEOD: I will just take you briefly to that:  
7 e3.001.8323. Is this a message that you posted on  
8 that private forum?

9 A. No, I posted it on the main website.

10 Q. On the Corbie website?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. So is this you then going back to use the Corbie  
13 website?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Do you know when you posted this?

16 A. It would be shortly after August 2002.

17 Q. So this was before the set-up of the new more private  
18 forum?

19 A. Yes, long before, yes.

20 Q. I see. I think you discuss there, as you have said, the  
21 practice of the use of loincloths. Could you tell me  
22 about your memories of that?

23 A. It was quite vicious really because people used to flick  
24 them at you and you could get quite a serious injury.

25 Q. Was that at Carlekemp --

- 1 A. Carlekemp, yes.
- 2 Q. -- during the showering?
- 3 A. Yes, I don't think -- I don't think they were at  
4 Fort Augustus, but I may be wrong.
- 5 Q. So was the loincloth something you were provided with to  
6 wear in the shower to provide a little bit of privacy?
- 7 A. To protect our modesty, yes.
- 8 Q. What are you describing as vicious -- what would happen  
9 with the loincloths?
- 10 A. They were just used by boys to -- on other boys. There  
11 was nothing sinister.
- 12 Q. I think you tell us they then stopped using them; is  
13 that right?
- 14 A. I think they did, yes.
- 15 Q. Did you give a statement to the police, Des?
- 16 A. I did, yes. I think --
- 17 Q. Was this in 2013?
- 18 A. Yes. Yes, I did, yes.
- 19 Q. I think you say you have provided the inquiry with  
20 a copy of your recollections of the information you  
21 provided in the statement.
- 22 A. Yes, I gave a copy of the statement, yes.
- 23 Q. I think you have also had involvement with a [REDACTED]  
24 [REDACTED]
- 25 A. That is right, yes.

1 Q. You tell us about that in your statement. In relation  
2 to records, have you tried to get any of your records  
3 from the Benedictines?

4 A. Yes, I tried to get my school records from both schools.  
5 There was nothing available from Carlekemp, nothing at  
6 all. Fort Augustus were just my marks in exams, and  
7 then a small comment about when I left school going to  
8 university but that was all. Very flimsy.

9 Q. At the end of your statement, Des, you set out some  
10 lessons which you think could be learned, and I think  
11 you say that there should be a continuation of current  
12 checks on schools and disclosure certificates for all  
13 job applicants.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. I think you reflect on the fact that children now know  
16 their rights.

17 A. I hope so, yes.

18 Q. You have provided, Des, a supplementary statement for  
19 the inquiry and I think that is something that you are  
20 hoping to read out. I don't have any further questions  
21 for you, but if you would like to read that out, this  
22 might be a good opportunity to do that. There is a copy  
23 of it in your folder after the divider.

24 A. I have my own copy here. Thank you.

25 LADY SMITH: Please go ahead, Des, when you are ready.

1       A. Thank you. This was very much a reaction to the  
2       evidence given by Richard Yeo on 23 June 2017. I had  
3       time to read the transcript of that:

4                "Having now read the transcript of Richard Yeo's  
5       evidence given to the inquiry on 23 June 2017 I wish to  
6       make an additional statement.

7                "I was disgusted with what he had to say. It was  
8       a well-rehearsed performance, his main purpose being to  
9       continue to deny any responsibility by the English  
10       Benedictine Congregation for abuse that took place at  
11       Carlekemp and Fort Augustus. He showed scant  
12       consideration for the victims of abuse and seems to have  
13       made no attempt to investigate the abuse that had taken  
14       place. His mealy-mouthed apology on behalf of himself  
15       as an individual just did not ring true. He takes great  
16       pride in letting us know that he insisted [REDACTED]

17       [REDACTED]  
18       [REDACTED] that he be allowed to apologise for  
19       any abuse that may have taken place.

20                "He continues to use 'may' or 'might'. I am sure  
21       that any victims would find the use of that additional  
22       word extremely insulting in view of the considerable  
23       body of evidence that has now come to light.

24                "He states that the English Benedictine Congregation  
25       was formed to provide co-ordination, some sort of



1 inspection and some sort of remedy if things go wrong.  
2 The purpose was to reduce the dangers arising from the  
3 excessive isolation, as he called it, of individual  
4 monasteries. He can't have it both ways. The English  
5 Benedictine Congregation either didn't know what was  
6 going on, in which case they failed in their overseeing  
7 role, or they knew but took no action and were complicit  
8 in covering up abuse.

9 "It defies belief that they were not aware of the  
10 activities of the self-confessed sexual abuser  
11 [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] who returned to [REDACTED] in 1977  
12 with no warning given to the church or authorities  
13 there, Aidan Duggan who was dispatched to be a chaplain  
14 to nuns at Stanbrook Abbey in 1965 after ten years of  
15 abusing pupils at both schools, [REDACTED] returned to  
16 Australia in 1974 with no warnings given, and  
17 [REDACTED] MFF [REDACTED] who was relieved of his duties as  
18 [REDACTED] in 1972 after beating three boys so viciously  
19 that one had to have his wounds attended by the local  
20 doctor.

21 "The lack of records from the two schools and  
22 Fort Augustus Abbey is simply astonishing and destroying  
23 personal files of monks when they died or left the  
24 monastery is very strange. For someone who is Abbot  
25 President of the English Benedictine Congregation

1 Richard Yeo doesn't seem to have much idea of what was  
2 going on. When asked if that was normal practice to  
3 destroy the records of the congregation, his reply was  
4 'I don't think so but I don't really know'.

5 "Richard Yeo says he had received letters from  
6 former pupils referring to Carlekemp and Fort Augustus  
7 in his words 'implying that it was a fairly robust  
8 regime'. He is indeed a master of understatement.  
9 I doubt that any of the former pupils used that moderate  
10 language.

11 "What pertained at the two schools from the 1920s  
12 through to at least the 1970s can only be described as  
13 institutionalised violence. Richard Yeo confirmed  
14 several times during his hearing that teaching  
15 qualifications were not required at the schools, even  
16 though he acknowledges the serious obligations of the  
17 schools, he accepts that they had a legal duty of care  
18 to each child in its care and a legal duty not to cause  
19 harm to children in its care. They failed lamentably on  
20 both counts.

21 "He makes a vague reference to one of the first  
22 headmasters. 'I think that in the 1930s there was  
23 a layman who acted as headmaster'. The person he was  
24 referring to is Commander Gilbert Farie, who began as  
25 a teacher at Fort Augustus, became prefect of discipline

1 in 1924 and was made headmaster from 1930 to 1938. His  
2 ideas of discipline have been formed on the TS Mercury,  
3 the naval training ship for 12 to 15 year old boys run  
4 by the sadistic [REDACTED]. It was  
5 a brutal regime of lashings and beatings and floggings.  
6 The culture of violence was firmly established. The  
7 qualifications from now on for the three senior  
8 positions at Fort Augustus, the two housemaster  
9 positions and the one headmaster, appeared to be that  
10 the candidates had to have gone through the same regime  
11 and been a former pupil of the schools. What chance was  
12 there for this cycle of violence to stop unless it was  
13 recognised and action taken by someone, some  
14 organisation, from outside the schools? The opportunity  
15 was there for the English Benedictine Congregation to do  
16 something. They did nothing.

17 "Housemasters who were [REDACTED] included

18 [REDACTED] MFG

Celestine Haworth,

[REDACTED] MFE

19 and

[REDACTED] MFC

[REDACTED] were

20 [REDACTED] MFD

[REDACTED] MEX

[REDACTED] MMF

21 and

[REDACTED] MFF

22 [REDACTED] MFE

retired as housemaster in 1967. He

23 was described by the then [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] MKT

24 as 'an unchanging pillar of the school'. I'm sure that

25 those former pupils who, like me, were victims of his

1 brutality wish the pillar had been removed a long time  
2 ago.

3 "I have learned that funds raised from the assets of  
4 Fort Augustus Abbey have been put into a trust to  
5 provide compensation to victims. I would imagine that  
6 this fund is fairly limited, and I am concerned that  
7 this is just another attempt to limit the liability for  
8 abuse to just the schools and not the English  
9 Benedictine Congregation and ultimately the Holy See.

10 The Catholic Church is one of the wealthiest  
11 institutions in the world and it can well afford to  
12 properly compensate victims financially, though this  
13 will never make up for the lasting damage suffered by  
14 victims of serious abuse.

15 MS MacLEOD: Thank you very much for that, Des. For the  
16 transcript, that statement can be found at  
17 WIT.003.001.9977.

18 My Lady, I am not aware of any other questions for  
19 Des.

20 LADY SMITH: Thank you. Are there any outstanding  
21 applications for questions?

22 Des, those are all the questions that we have for  
23 you. Thank you so much for engaging with the inquiry,  
24 both by providing your written statement and the  
25 additional material that you have referred to, such as

1 the photograph and the letters that went on to your  
2 website and the document that you have just read. This  
3 is all very, very helpful to me and I am very grateful  
4 to you for coming along and engaging as you have. I am  
5 now able to let you go.

6 Before you make your way out of the room, I think  
7 the photograph I have in my mind, amongst the other  
8 evidence I heard today, came from somebody else, not  
9 you. But it is very much in the same vein as what you  
10 have been helping us with today. Thank you.

11 (The witness withdrew)

12 Ms MacLeod, it is now 4.05 pm. I think that is as  
13 far as we can get today.

14 MS MacLEOD: That is so, my Lady. We have three more  
15 witnesses lined up tomorrow from 10 o'clock.

16 LADY SMITH: Very well. I will rise now until 10 o'clock  
17 tomorrow morning. Thank you very much.

18 (4.05 pm)

19 (The inquiry adjourned until 10.00 am  
20 on Friday, 26 July 2019)

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