

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

MMA

Support person present: No

1. My name is MMA My date of birth is 1966. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before boarding school

2. I was born in West Germany. My father was a military officer so we travelled about with him following his postings to various RAF bases around Europe. My mother is . I have three brothers. is eight years older than me, is six years older and is two and a half years older. and are known by their middle names and . At some point my parents bought a cottage in Forres in the early 1970s.
3. My initial education was at various RAF service schools wherever my father was based. When my father left the RAF he retired to the north east of Scotland. He had gone to boarding school and I think it was his intention to do the same with us. We were fairly anglicised by that time and I don't think we would have fitted in to local state schools. Fort Augustus was one of the options and was the closest to where we were living. At the age of ten I was sent to Fort Augustus Abbey School and I joined in S3. My brother came with me. and were going to Dollar Academy which was near where we were staying when they started going to school.
4. Before I went to Fort Augustus we went shopping to Aitken and Niven in Edinburgh where we got a trunk full of all the uniform and equipment that I was going to need. and I also had a few trips with my dad to Fort Augustus and we met Father

MMF

SNR

We went to have a look around the school. We didn't have to sit any exams to be accepted into Fort Augustus.

Fort Augustus Abbey School, Fort Augustus

5. Fort Augustus Abbey was situated on the banks of Loch Ness very close to the Caledonian canal. It had a long driveway leading up from the road. The buildings sat in their own enormous grounds. Almost half of the buildings were set aside for the monastery which included accommodation for the brothers and the church. The monks accommodation was out of bounds for the boys. The main building was an early nineteenth century building. There was a formal front door which led into the assembly room and the 'hospice' wing which was where the headmaster's office was. Boys didn't use this front entrance apart from in sixth form. Boys used another door at the side of the building.
6. On the ground floor there was the refectory, prep hall, a couple of classrooms, assembly room, staff common room, and piano rooms. On the first floor were more classrooms, common rooms, some fifth and sixth form studies, the library, snooker rooms and the house masters offices. There was a very grand staircase which led from the ground floor up to the dormitories on the top floor. The dormitories were in the names of the houses, Calder, Vaughan and Lovat. There were about forty boys in each dormitory.
7. Fort Augustus Abbey School was going through a period of change when I went there. There had previously been a prep school called Carlekemp in North Berwick but that had closed and had amalgamated with Fort Augustus. This meant that children went to Fort Augustus from as early as seven. There was still reorganisation going on when I got there.
8. Fort Augustus Abbey School was run by the St Benedictine order of monks. The monks wore long black habits ninety percent of the time. They would wear appropriate clothes if they were doing something else like refereeing a rugby match. Father

MMF

MMF was SNR Father MFC was the housemaster for Calder house. Father MFG was the Vaughan housemaster. Father MRQ was the Lovat housemaster. I later found out his full name was MRQ MRQ There was a matron but I can't remember her name. She was an older, Irish lady. Father MFA was a teacher and he had previously come from Carlekemp where he was a house master. He had silver hair and was a heavy smoker and a drinker. At some point Father MFG died and Father MFA MFA took over his role as Vaughan housemaster.

9. There was an Abbot, Nicholas Holman who lived in the monastery. He was the head of the monastery but looking back now as an adult I have no doubt that he had more control in relation to the running of Fort Augustus. I don't think that MMF had summary powers to deal with some of the issues and I think that is where the Abbot got involved.
10. The junior house was called Calder House and was for the youngest children. There were two senior houses called Vaughan and Lovat. Each had their respective house masters. Calder house had its own dormitory accommodation and there was some separation from the senior boys in respect of changing rooms and prep rooms.

Routine at Fort Augustus

First day

11. I was very nervous about going to Fort Augustus. My father drove myself and my brother to the school. It was quite chaotic when we got there because other boys were arriving. My mum and dad helped us move our stuff in. We were appropriately looked after on that first day. They didn't put a red carpet out for us but we managed to find our way about. Initially I was put in a building called the "Lodge" which was an annexe and was a separate house. It was like a gatehouse and was situated at the bottom of the driveway. was put in a dormitory in the main house because he was older and went into Vaughan house. In the evening I was probably a bit homesick.

I remember the housemaster and the matron coming round and making sure I was okay. We were in the "Lodge" for a few weeks until the dormitories in the main house had been reorganised.

Mornings and bedtime

12. The routine changed throughout the time I was there as I got older. The normal routine in the morning would be that at seven fifteen the dormitory lights were switched on by the housemaster or a duty housemaster. We would get up and go down to the basement where the washing facilities were. We would get washed, brush our teeth and were expected to be in mass or in the study hall by seven forty. This went on until eight and then we went to the refectory for breakfast. After breakfast we would go back to our dorms, make our beds and got ready for school. There was a school assembly for all the boys at eight forty. After that we went to our classrooms.
13. Bedtime was generally administered by the prefects. A lot of what went on at Fort Augustus was organised by the prefects. They looked after the young boys and made sure they were all in their beds. I think for the young ones it was 'lights out' at nine fifteen. There were duty prefects sleeping in every dorm to prevent any mischief. The housemasters, maybe once or twice a week, would walk through the dorms at night with a torch to check up on us.

Mealtimes/Food

14. There were tables in the refectory for junior and senior pupils. All the boys ate in the same refectory. You could sit anywhere at these designated tables. Food was generally very basic. At lunchtime we would go back to the refectory. There was a table in our refectory where the lay teachers would sit at lunch-time. The house masters would also sit at this table. There were duty fifth formers who would serve the food and all the boys would have to queue and wait to be served. The monks ate in their own refectory. Even the monks who were teachers would go there.

15. Breakfast was cornflakes, porridge or pan bread. The food at lunch and suppertime was fine. I had no real complaints about the food. If you didn't like any particular food then it was 'tough luck'. There was no alternative apart from eating some bread.

Washing/bathing

16. We washed in the morning when we got up. We showered after we had done sport. We had a bath on a Saturday which was in huge Victorian baths. There were nine baths in rows of three. There was no supervision when showering or bathing.

Clothing/uniform

17. I wore the school uniform which had been bought for me by my parents. There were several outfits according to the occasion.

Leisure time

18. After school lunch, from Tuesday to Saturday, most days there would be games or sports organised. That would take us up to mid-afternoon. We had our tea then two classes which would last until six. Evening meal was at seven. We would then do prep until eight or nine. On Saturday we had classes in the morning then games in the afternoon. At six we had singing then at night we had a film in the assembly hall. Sunday morning we had mass. I suppose we had some spare time on Sunday afternoon. Because everything was planned for us and structured we were kept very busy and there was very little personal leisure time.
19. If you wanted to leave the grounds of the school you needed permission and had to complete the exeat book. You could get permission to go into the village of Fort Augustus or to go out with your parents for a meal but it was all controlled.

School

20. Our houses were split up and we went to classes according to our age. I came from an anglicised background in the armed forces in Europe and what sticks out in hindsight was how deferential all the boys were to the priests at school. Some of the boys were quite hardy boys but as soon as the priests walked in the boys heads went down and they became almost subservient saying "yes father, no father". I found this culturally unusual. All the lay teaching staff were perfectly affable and likeable.
21. Education was, with hindsight, a bit chaotic and didn't really move with the times. Most of the monks had been brought up in the school and stayed on at the monastery and became teachers. They just adopted the same formula that they had grown up with then imposed it on others. Education was slightly hindered because it was a religious person who was teaching and they wanted you to be a good Catholic first before you learned or excelled in anything else. It was very puritanical.

Healthcare

22. Matron was the first port of call with any illness. Once I cut my eye and had to go to the local doctors. Father MFA who had previously been at Carlekemp, claimed that he had done medical training at Glasgow University and he occasionally gave advice and help in medical matters. I am not sure if he had any medical training. Healthcare at Fort Augustus was not an issue.

Religious instruction

23. The amount of religious instruction we got in school was fairly normal even by today's standards and in line with other non-religious schools. In terms of culture we were living and breathing Catholicism. We had optional mass before school in the morning. We had optional confession on Saturday evening and we had non optional mass on Sunday morning. There were vespers on Sunday evening. I don't think the religion was plugged inappropriately. We were at a monastic order and our parents sent us

there so it was not nefarious. I am not aware of any awards or incentives for doing well in religious studies.

Work

24. We had to keep our bed space and locker tidy. There were spot checks done by the house masters and prefects. We didn't have any other chores to do.

Visits

25. My parents came very seldom. They may have visited two or three times in all the time I was there. When they came we went out to a local hotel for Sunday lunch. They also came at the end of term times to take us home.

Sibling contact

26. I was able to speak to my brother at mealtimes, dinner breaks and evening time. It was not restricted. If I wanted to speak to him at any time I could.

Family contact

27. We had letter writing sessions and we were obliged to write letters home. We didn't have to do this in sixth form. I don't remember writing very often to my parents. My parents wrote more often to me. My letters were still sealed when I got them. I have no reason to suspect that the letters to my parents were interfered with.

Personal possessions

28. Each bed-space contained bunk beds and was given some privacy by means of oak panelling. There were two long metal lockers which were shelved. You could have some personal possessions in there.

Discipline

29. No one ever sat down and told me the rules and regulations of what was and wasn't allowed. I just really picked things up as I went along. Prefects who were nominated by the school watched out for misdemeanours. If the prefects caught you with your hands in your pockets or other minor misdemeanours they could punish you by putting you on bin duty or some other menial chore. A list would go up on the notice board with this. I don't think this was recorded anywhere else. If prefects discovered more serious misdemeanours they would refer you to your housemaster who would punish you accordingly. The housemaster might give you three of the strap on each hand or the cane on your backside. I don't think that was ever recorded anywhere.
30. I presume prefects were chosen after a discussion between the house masters, the monks and the lay teachers. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] There were two school prefects and two prefects in each house. We were all responsible for the daily routine and running of the school. I would allocate tasks for each of the prefects and make sure all the duties were covered. These included things like making sure all the boys were up and got ready for school. I saw the prefects every day at the school assembly and I would chat with them. There was no official briefing. I liaised a lot with the teachers who would advise me if they had become aware of misdemeanours. This may be things like minor thefts from the changing rooms, bullying, reports of smoking or even glue sniffing. I would then pass this information to the other prefects and we would make discrete enquiries to find out who were responsible.

Abuse at Fort Augustus

Father [MFA]

31. Father [MFA] became more and more involved in dealing with boys who were sick. He came across as being a very compassionate man. I was aware of him treating boys when I was in the juniors in Calder house. Father [MFA] had a bit of a reputation of being a bit too 'touchy feely'. I was aware that he would rub Vick onto boys chest if they had a cold although I never saw him doing this. When I was about fourteen, Father [MFG] died and Father [MFA] became the housemaster for Vaughan. By that time I had moved on from Calder and was in Vaughan house.
32. I remember when I was fourteen I had quite a bad muscular strain in my leg and I also had haemorrhoids. The matron had given me cream for my muscle injury and cream for my haemorrhoids. Father [MFA] knew about this and asked how I was getting on. I told him I wasn't great so he invited me to go to his office in the evening after prep. When I went there he gave me a leg massage, including my buttocks and backside. He also applied the cream to my haemorrhoids. He didn't put his finger inside me. I did not feel at the time that there was anything sexual in what he did to me. I thought it was all for my medical wellbeing. Looking back however I think he must have been getting some kind of thrill.
33. Father [MFA] was a [redacted] teacher and he had his [redacted]. About a year after the haemorrhoid cream incident I was walking past his [redacted]. He waved me in. He was obviously drunk and he started saying that he was just like me and that he had two balls and a prick. I thought it was really weird. He grabbed my hand and tried to force my hand down towards his genitals. I pulled away and backed off and left the room.
34. Sometime later another boy, [redacted], said to me he had been alone with Father [MFA] and he said to [redacted] that he had two balls and a prick just like him. That was exactly what Father [MFA] had said to me. According to [redacted] nothing further happened but it rang alarm bells with me.

35. I became aware of an incident with a boy called [REDACTED]. He was the same age as me, fifteen. He had been in my year but had been put back a year as a result of underperforming. He was in some sort of trouble with the geography teacher but not sure what he had done. He was sent to Father [MFA] who was the housemaster. Afterwards [REDACTED] told me that he had gone to the [REDACTED] and Father [MFA] had invited [REDACTED] to masturbate him. Apparently Father [MRQ] had walked in when [REDACTED] had his hand on Father [MFA] penis. That was all that [REDACTED] told me. This happened a very short time before I left school.

Father [MRQ]

36. When I was eleven there was an incident [REDACTED]. Myself and [REDACTED] and possibly [REDACTED] had pushed a boy into [REDACTED] and he banged his head. Father [MRQ] exploded and was mad at us. He told us to go to his office. We went there and he caned us each four times on the backside over our clothes. We each went in separately to his office and the door was closed. I didn't see the others getting caned. This was the first time I had ever experienced the cane. We were upset because, in our view, Father [MRQ] had overreacted and he wasn't even our housemaster. None of us were injured or had to see the matron.

Reporting of abuse at Fort Augustus

37. When Father [MFA] was rubbing the cream into my bottom, Father [MMF], the [SNR] came into the room. He immediately said he would come back later and excused himself. Father [MMF] obviously felt uncomfortable by what Father [MFA] was doing to me.
38. At the time when Father [MFA] put the haemorrhoid cream on me, I didn't really think it was sexual but looking back now I can see that it was another example of him being a little too free and easy with his hands. I never told anyone about this when I was at Fort Augustus.

39. When I was in my sixth and final year at Fort Augustus Abbey I was [REDACTED]. In the early part of the summer term I became aware of an incident. Young boys had found some inappropriate material in Father MFA's [REDACTED]. One was [REDACTED]'s little brother and I think his name was [REDACTED]. Another was [REDACTED]. There were others but I can't remember their names. These boys were between eleven and twelve. They had been rummaging in the [REDACTED] looking for the end of term [REDACTED] exam paper. I believe that in a metal filing cabinet they found some gay bondage magazines. I never saw the magazines. Along with other rumours that were going around at the time I approached Father MMF SNR [REDACTED] and spoke to him about it. I told him about the magazines. He said that he would investigate and get back to me.
40. Two days later I was invited to Father MMF [REDACTED] office. He told me that he had had a conversation with Father MFA [REDACTED]. Father MMF [REDACTED] started saying how amazing what is sent out in random mailing in this day and age. It was apparent that he was covering up for Father MFA [REDACTED]. I only had a couple of months left at Fort Augustus so I decided it wasn't worth pursuing and jeopardising my position.
41. I feel angry and have a grievance about the inaction by Father MMF [REDACTED]. I was just a young guy and I did everything right by telling Father MMF [REDACTED]. He knew perfectly well what was going on with Father MFA [REDACTED] and consequently he took no action leaving Father MFA [REDACTED] in his post as housemaster. I personally don't think Father MMF [REDACTED] had the power to move monks about and this would have been within the power of the Abbott, Nicholas Holman. I suspect that Father MMF [REDACTED] had gone to the abbot and told him about the gay magazines and the abbot told him to sort it out himself, probably because there was no one available to come and take Father MFA's [REDACTED] place.
42. Even though I was occasionally writing to my parents I never told them about what I had experienced at Fort Augustus. Even now I haven't really sat down with them and told them about it in any detail.

Life after boarding school

43. I left school at the end of my sixth form. My time at school came to a natural conclusion. I went to Africa and I was there about a year and I did some work for my uncle. I joined the Royal Marines in 1986 and spent nine years doing that. After that I moved down to London and got involved in the construction business. I now have my own construction business. I married eleven years ago and have two children.

Impact

44. I don't think that the incidents of abuse has impacted on me negatively. I think what has impacted on me was the confined environment of a monastery school. When my friends and I left Fort Augustus it was almost like we were making up for lost time. We didn't know how to control our relationship with women or alcohol. We went daft for a while.
45. I think I have and will continue to bring my children up differently to how I was brought up. I will make sure they are not exposed to what I was and that their early years are mellow and they have the ability to make choices and form relationships which I didn't have. I don't have a negative view on boarding schools because I think they have changed a lot. What was bad about the boarding school I went to was that it was very intense and it was all about survival. Any weaknesses, or people who had a different outlook on life, were identified and they were not tolerated. Most schools have addressed that today.
46. My relationship with my brother was not affected, and if anything it possibly brought us closer together. One of the positive impacts boarding school has had on me has been in relation to the friends I made there. Because we were all in that often unpleasant experience together, we helped each other through it and made us all become good friends.

Treatment/support

47. I have never felt the need for any kind of treatment or support as I was not adversely affected by my time at Fort Augustus. I have however found the process of giving statements to the police and the Inquiry about my experiences at boarding school to be cathartic.

Reporting of Abuse

48. About five or six years ago I contacted the police when it was first mentioned in the media about abuse at Fort Augustus. First there was an article in the Guardian newspaper, then there was the BBC documentary called 'The sins of our fathers'. I wanted to tell the police about my experiences with Father [MFA] in case it provided support or backed up any other reports that they had received about him, either when he was in Carlekemp or after I had left Fort Augustus. I also wanted to tell them I had told Father [MMF] about Father [MFA] but that nothing had happened with the information I provided. This was my main grievance and the reason I contacted the police. I gave a statement to a child protection officer.
49. I also went to the police because I wanted to tell them about [MLL]. In my time at Fort Augustus I knew [MLL] and he had allegedly been abused by Father [MEV] the year before I arrived. [MEV] is currently awaiting extradition from Australia. I wanted to tell the police that I was positive [MLL] had been abused just as it was alleged at school. [MLL] was subjected to several years of merciless taunting by his peers. He was traumatised. I have no doubt [MLL] was telling the truth. He never told me that it actually happened but he never denied it but other boys repeatedly told me that he had. I believe [MLL] had confided in other people after it happened but I am not sure who.
50. About six months after I had given this statement to the police they re-contacted me and asked me if I was aware of a caning incident involving Father [MRQ]. This was the incident where I was caned after the [redacted] incident. I told them I

was. They asked me to write a statement out and send it to them which I did. I took a lot of time and effort and sent them what I thought was an accurate list of the facts and gave a very balanced and honest account of Father [REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED] I am of the opinion that whilst it was heavy-handed and inappropriate [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Records

51. I have never tried to get any of my records from Fort Augustus.

Lessons to be Learned

52. The main thing I would like to see from the Inquiry is a debate to open up about certain facets of our religious practice. For example celibacy in the priesthood, and religious orders and the control they may have over children. Both from a cultural point of view and not just in relation to sexual abuse. Is it right for a child to be put in a ring fenced environment and then at the end the child comes out asking how that was allowed to happen in modern Britain. Unfortunately the lack of action in the Catholic church is reprehensible. There has to be transparency in all the debates and decision making process.

Other information

53. I have been back to Fort Augustus Abbey several times since I left when I was in the area. It is very forlorn now because it is no longer the monastery that it was. It is very much a vestige of the past. It continues to crumble.
54. There were a lot of institutions, including the media and the Crown Office, who all acted in their own interests. The media lifted the lid on the whole issue and produced a heavily stylised documentary on Fort Augustus. They painted a dark picture because

it suited the media's theatre They focussed on two or three victims and not the several hundred other boys who didn't live in fear. This was exacerbated by a lack of action from the Catholic church.

55. [REDACTED] When I made my original statement to the police I was assured that this was done confidentially. When I made the second written statement there wasn't the same reassurance. [REDACTED]

56. [REDACTED]

57. I came out [REDACTED] feeling that I had gone in to complain about Father MFA and they had used me, as a willing and cooperative guy, to help them get the scalp of someone else. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I believe the [REDACTED] system fell down quite badly. I would be very reluctant to get involved in the [REDACTED]

process again without any firm reassurances that they were being thorough. The [REDACTED] were very unprofessional and it was obvious that they just wanted it all wrapped up by the Friday afternoon.

- 58. There were [REDACTED] and they were saying that we had been through hell and had it tough and he hoped [REDACTED] [REDACTED] This was completely inappropriate for them to prejudge.
- 59. Having been through the [REDACTED] process I don't believe the process to deal with historical abuse cases was fit for purpose.
- 60. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..... [REDACTED] MMA

Dated..... *28 March 2019*