

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

MOH

Support person present: No

1. My name is MOH My date of birth is 1961. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going to school

2. Before I went away to school, my father worked for a company that ran airports and trade around the world. Our life was always spent abroad and in third world countries. My mum is Dutch and she went back to The Netherlands to have me as she has a rare blood group. I then went back to Nigeria with her as a very young baby. At first we lived mainly in Nigeria and Libya, and then, when I was a little older we were mainly living in Tanzania and Kenya. I went to British schools and from the age of nine I went away to boarding school.
3. My father's name was and he passed away some years ago. My mother is and she lives in England. My parents divorced when I was a teenager and my mother then came to live in the UK and my father remained in various places abroad. My mum remarried. My sister now lives in Kent and she is two years older than me and my brother lives in New Zealand and he is two years younger than me.
4. Life was wonderful before I started boarding school. There were no restrictions on our life style. Experiencing the wildlife in Africa was wonderful for us and it was everywhere. My father was quite high up in business and he knew the game wardens

in the parks in Kenya and that gave us access to amazing experiences of observing animals. My father was originally from Glasgow and his mother, my granny, still lived there and we used to fly to the UK to visit her. When I started to fly to and from Africa for school in Scotland I would be chaperoned on the flight and spend most of the flight in the cockpit. As my dad knew a lot of pilots I got to see behind the scenes at airports.

5. I was sent to boarding school from the age of nine. I initially went to school in Helensburgh for one term and then went to Kildonan in Ayrshire for just over one year. I then took an examination, I think this was the eleven-plus, to get into Fort Augustus Abbey School. It was a big deal for me and I had to study hard for the exam.

Fort Augustus Abbey School, Invernesshire

6. I started at the school in [REDACTED] 1972 at the age of eleven. I believe the school was chosen for me because of its reputation. My parents had also looked at Gordonstoun for me, but the reputation of Fort Augustus was better. My mum was brought up in a strict Roman Catholic family and lived through a lot of things in The Netherlands during the war and this had turned her off religion. My dad was brought up Catholic, but was not religious. As a family we went to church at Christmas and Easter only.
7. I feel sure my parents visited the school before I started there as my mum has told me quite recently that she visited. I don't recall visiting Fort Augustus Abbey School myself before I started there and I don't believe I had even seen the school. When I took the entrance exam I was still at school in Kildonan and knew I had to pass it in order to get into Fort Augustus. I don't remember having any expectations of Fort Augustus School before I started there.
8. The school was an old fort. There was a lovely clock tower. When you entered the building, there were huge staircases. On the ground floor, there were school rooms and prep rooms and at the end of the corridor was the dining room. On the next level there was a wing to the right where the senior boys had their own small study rooms

to share between two or three pupils. There was a science lab and some house master offices. On the left there was a big room where the school used to show old black and white horror movies. The dormitories were on the next level up. I think there were two large dormitories with bunk beds and I don't recall if the dorm rooms had individual names. There were wooden partitions between each pair of beds, like stalls. The partition wasn't closed and the entrance to each partitioned section was always open.

9. I think the age range of the pupils was from 11-18. There were rules like no running in the corridor or on the stairs and that would be punishable by the cane or the strap. That happened to me, The rules were the rules, and if you broke them you suffered the consequences. The routine of the school was never going to be soft. Boys couldn't afford to be soft, but some never learned how to cope. Everyone kept those feelings to themselves. I didn't even think there was a concern as it was just the way things were.
10. We also had a lot of freedom and a lot of fun. I enjoyed the sports such as hockey and rugby. I liked the cross country runs. The sports were compulsory and the non-sporty boys had to do them too. The school had good tennis courts and a hockey field. I learned to play badminton there and continued to play as an adult. We played other schools at sport.
11. There were certain times for doing prep, lunch times were set and you didn't miss any of those. There were rules for things like where you kept your own tuck box and it was kept in an area off the play rooms. The school had its own sweet shop and parents gave pocket money to the boys and we could spend it during term time.

Staff

12. I recall that SNR for my last year at the school was Father MMF MMF There was someone else before him, but I can't think of the name. After Father MMF I believe Father MRQ became SNR I recall Father MRQ as a big guy, very loud and taught in the department and was involved in the school sports. He was also head of one of the houses. He wasn't my head of house

so he didn't have direct responsibility over me, but if he saw me doing anything wrong he would still be able to deal with it.

13. If you were in trouble for something, or on report, it would go to your housemaster who would then deal with it. Boys were accountable to their housemaster for their behaviour. I recall that there were three houses and one was called Lovat, but I can't recall the other house names. I can't remember being in a house myself and I think in the first two or three years at the school you didn't have a house, but we still had a house master. Only after that are you put into one of them. I know my housemaster was Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED]. At school he was called by myself, and other boys, as Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] and it was only sometime after I left the school that I found out his given name was different.
14. The boys from different houses were mixed in the dorm. I think that the houses only really mattered when it came to sports teams and we'd then be divided up to play each other according to house name. Sometimes a house would organise a certain activity, such as a skiing trip, and members of that house could sign up for it. The role of housemaster meant they were responsible for the welfare of the boys in that house. I never went to another housemaster to report anything or discuss anything, it had to be with him.
15. With regard to other staff members I recall Mr [REDACTED] MIH [REDACTED] and I think he was our [REDACTED] teacher. He wasn't a monk. I think there were only two civilian teachers when I was there. He'd been a fighter pilot in world war two on aircraft carriers and he would tell us loads of stories about his role during the war. He was well-liked. There was also [REDACTED] teacher called Mr [REDACTED] MFH [REDACTED]. We had [REDACTED] lessons in a separate building along from the main entrance and along the canal. He was a chubby guy. I think he was bald and in his forties or fifties. The lay teachers [REDACTED]
16. Mr [REDACTED] MIH [REDACTED] had [REDACTED] and they were educated in the school. One of them was in my class in my last year. They were the [REDACTED] to start at the school.

17. There was also Father **MEZ** a tall, skinny guy in his fifties. He had huge hands. He was always smiling at us. He had a habit of always licking his lips. I don't think he was a teacher, but he was always in and around the school. He always used to like to rub his hands along your back or try to get his hands underneath your top when we were using the gym equipment. He did this to me and to other boys and it was not done secretly.
18. Outside, in the grounds there were wooden buildings, just past the church, and that's where the badminton courts were. He would always be around that area and asking 'how are you?' and rub your back at the same time. It was considered, by the boys, as just something that Father **MEZ** did and it was nothing. He'd try to get his hand underneath your top. He tried to do it to other boys. Boys would say 'look out there's Father **MEZ**' and try to move away from him as they walked or ran past him.
19. Father **MRQ** had **MEZ** and sometimes I helped him with **MEZ**. There was also a teacher, a monk, who was a choirmaster. I have forgotten his name, but recall he died of a heart attack after I was there. He was a nice guy and he also ran the military brigade of the CCF and that stood for Cadet Corp Force. Mr **MIH** ran the **MEZ** section. We had live guns as well. I was too young to be in the corp. Boys would be dressed in khaki gear and doing drills and presentations.
20. There were other monks who you would see in the grounds and some didn't have anything to do with the school. I can picture some of the monks, but I don't know their names. I recall there was one who had **MEZ** I think. A few monks organised the section that dealt with visitors to the monastery. Some monks did the cooking, for the monastery, but I think some women from the local area cooked for the school boys. The boys never spoke to them, so I don't know their names.
21. With regard to the monks who didn't teach, I've no idea what their roles were. Some did the gardening. They lived a disciplined life and were often in their cloisters and they would be chanting. They didn't eat with us and did their own thing. If you stayed in the school over the half term it was so relaxed that even monks would be in ordinary dress.

Routine at Fort Augustus Abbey School

First day

22. I recall travelling there for the first time. My granny took me from Glasgow to Spean Bridge and then I took the school bus for the rest of the journey. The school was a big, imposing place. I can only recall a lot of confusion with lots of boys arriving at once and being introduced to the head master. I remember being shown my bunk bed, the house master's room, the dinner hall, the prep room. I think we were shown around as a group and not individually. We met the house master who told us about the rules. We were not introduced to individual teachers.
23. It was clear from the outset that 'rules are rules' and if you broke them, you would get punished. Also, in my experience, 'if you're the lowest grade, you're the lowest grade' in a public school. This meant that the youngest boys were the lowest grades and the older you got, the better status you were considered to be. If an older boy tells you to do something then you do it. You quickly learn, from observation, how to behave.
24. I can't recall any initiation ceremonies or rituals. The bullies want to know quickly what you're like and that's an initiation in itself as they want to identify who they can bully. New boys were always picked on. I can't recall any rituals later on in the school year, apart from fights in the boiler room that are referred to elsewhere in this statement.

Mornings and bedtime

25. I shared my dorm with a number of boys, with bunk beds on both sides of the room. There were maybe thirty boys in the dorm room. I stayed in that same dormitory throughout my time at the school. I may have had the same bunk bed throughout. I think in my dorm the age range was 11-14 years old.

26. The second dorm was for older boys from fourteen onwards and when boys got to sixth form they were in the other wing and were allocated their own rooms. They had their own radios or record players. I wasn't at the school for long enough to get to that stage.
27. I can't recall now where we kept our belongings such as clothes. I think we had our own shelves, but not in our dormitory. I can picture boys that I went to school with, but I can't recall their names. I think there was someone called [REDACTED] and there may have been someone called [REDACTED]
28. In the morning, we got up early between 6.30 to 7 am.
29. At bedtime we would get a wash and go back up to the dorm to change our clothes and then to bed and lights out. I have no idea what time the lights went out, but I'm sure we were in bed before 9 pm. It was supervised so that we changed our clothes. There were no adults sleeping in the dorms. The monks would sleep in their own cloisters.
30. There was supervision of the dorm around bedtime and that was done by one or other of the monks. This could be Father [REDACTED] MEV sometimes and often it was done by other monks. Sometimes the monk would decide half of the room of the boys would have to go downstairs to get the cane. If there was misbehaviour, such as talking after lights out or audible bullying, no-one would own up to it so the monk would then decide there should be a mass punishment. Then you would line up outside the housemaster's room in your pyjamas and await your turn for the cane before going back up to bed. This would happen maybe a couple of times in the term. It was part of life and to me it was normal. The caning would be done by the housemaster, Father [REDACTED] MEV

Mealtimes / Food

31. There were rules about the times of meals. We ate together in the large dining hall on the ground floor, filled with long tables and chairs. I think there around one hundred

boys eating together. There were no monks from the monastery were eating with us, only the housemasters sometimes ate with us. If you'd caught a fish when you'd gone out fishing the staff would cook it for you to eat. Otherwise the food was bog standard. I don't recall having any complaints about the food. There were no issues with boys being made to eat the food and if you didn't like the food you just didn't eat. There were no choices of food at mealtimes. We ate breakfast, lunch and evening meal in the same dining hall. If you stayed in the school over half term you would be offered a choice of food for breakfast.

Washing / bathing

32. We would get a wash every morning and washed after sports in the showers. The showers and bathrooms were in the basement. There were rows of baths. There was a wall with loads of shower heads. They were all open and there were no partitions. There were sinks. If someone had had the cane you could always tell when you saw them in the showers as you could see the bruises and you could see how many times they had it. I think the showers were supervised.

Clothing / uniform

33. I can't recall now who was responsible for washing and pressing the clothes. Our uniform was trousers, beige tweed jacket, shirt and tie. We also had a blazer with the school badge that was bright red and we wore it at the end of school term or for travelling. Mainly we wore the tweed jacket.
34. I got a new uniform and my father's company purchased it and paid my school fees. I wasn't aware of anyone at the school looking scruffy and I assumed everyone could afford to buy the clothes from the specific shop in Glasgow.

School

35. The first or second day back at school after holiday we had to go on a cross country run. No matter the weather. We had assembly every morning and then classes started

at 8:30 or 9 am. We had lessons in Latin, science, geography, maths and English. Then we had a break time before going to more lessons and then the mid-day break lasted for two to three hours. We had the afternoon to ourselves with no classes. We could do either sports or other things. At 5 or 6 pm we had prep time for two hours of homework. Then we ate dinner and after that we had free time until we went up the dorms.

36. Classes were divided up in accordance with your school year. My parents took me out of the school when I was fifteen so I didn't finish my secondary education at Fort Augustus. I can't comment on the standard of teaching. I had nothing to compare it to. I recall that we received report cards from the school and I was told off once by my father for not working hard enough as it was commented on in my report card.
37. I had no friends from outside of the school environment. There were no day pupils [REDACTED] apart from [REDACTED] MIH [REDACTED] children who [REDACTED]
38. We wrote letters to our family when we were in school. I believe all the letters were read by the school. I would write my letter to my parents and then hand them to the housemaster. I have no idea what I wrote in the letters and I would have to ask my mother about that. I don't recall if we were encouraged to write to our parents. There was no telephone in the school that boys could use to telephone their parents. The only telephone I was aware of in the school was the one in the housemasters office.
39. Occasionally there would be a letter sent home and once my dad got a letter from Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] and I don't know if it exists now. I was in serious trouble when I got home for trying to climb out of a window to go to meet some girls from the village. The letter would have been written as it was seen as a serious issue. I think I was aged twelve at the time.

Religion

40. We were not indoctrinated about religion. We had to attend Mass on a Sunday. Boys could join the choir if they wished, and I did, and they would attend rehearsals. We

would sing as a choir on Sundays. There was religious education in school. I am not aware of any religious medals being given out.

Trips / Holidays

41. My granny in Glasgow had us to stay at half-term and I had the same holidays as my siblings. The half-term holiday was one week. Sometimes I stayed at the school over the half-term holiday. Then we wore normal clothes and there was no timetable to follow and there was choice of food at breakfast time. The school was much more relaxed. Just a handful of monks stayed in the school and I think they took it in turns for who would stay in school. I recall that this included the monk who ran the CCF and this was great as he did the adventurous stuff.
42. I flew home to my parents in Africa, mainly in Kenya, in the main holidays and afterwards would fly to Heathrow before travelling up to Glasgow to meet my granny. She would then take me to Glasgow Central Station before I was put on the bus for the rest of the journey to the school.
43. Outside of school, as a house, we might go on an organised trip such as skiing. I have no recollection of any other trip.

Leisure time

44. There was a lot of freedom at the school and time to spend outdoors to do things like fishing and boating. We could buy tackle from a shop in the village. We also had a lot freedom to climb the local hills and rivers. There was a lot of sports activity. There was a games room of sorts where there was table tennis. Outside of school hours you could wear normal clothes and not school uniform. You could do almost anything outside of the school, provided you were in a group of three boys. There was a book in the housemaster's office to sign out from and describe where we were going. It was a thick, diary-like book.

45. In the evenings we would have homework. Then we had free time and could spend time outdoors. There was also a games room. In summer we could use the outdoor swimming pool in the grounds that was filled with water from the loch. One term was all about pellet guns that the boys bought from a local shop. Almost all of the boys had a pellet gun for shooting at one another. We used to run from tree to tree to hide from one another, it was like the wild west. We were never stopped from doing it. There was not a lot of supervision of our free time. There was no staff member on playground duties walking through the grounds.
46. At weekends or over half-term and sometimes in the week we would watch old black and white horror movies. It wasn't compulsory to watch the films. We told ghost stories by candlelight in the dorm and we'd hide under the beds. It was fun for boys. There was also photography with the art teacher. It was both part of the curriculum and could be done in our free time.
47. I'm pretty sure that the older boys, the ones in sixth form, had access to alcohol in their smaller study rooms. I'm sure they could have bought it in the village, as well as cigarettes and there was a lot of smoking going on. I was never aware of any drugs being available amongst the boys.
48. I was never aware of any drinking of alcohol amongst the staff members. I recall the monks always seemed to be busy. I never saw them laughing or joking. I did sometimes have conversations with the monks I saw in the gardens and they seemed normal people to me. I think their community was quiet and quite sombre. The monks I came across were fine with the boys and were civil, but there were some monks I never spoke to. There was never a great deal of interaction with them, only the ones with specific jobs within the school and the rest kept to themselves.

Birthdays and Christmas

49. These were always in the holidays when I would be with my family.

Visits / Inspections

50. I didn't get any visitors. My parents didn't come to see me at school. My granny didn't come to visit me. Some boys had visits from their family as not all of the children had parents who lived overseas. They would go out for the day together. With regard to other visitors, some monks would come and go and we would see them at Mass. Once a year at CCF day, we had people in from the military to inspect us. There was a drill performed for the visitors. I have no idea if any inspectors ever visited the school.

Siblings/contact

51. My brother [REDACTED] was at Carlekemp for one year. He is two years younger than me and would have moved on to Fort Augustus School, but when my parents divorced my mum took the three of us out of boarding school. I had contact with him when we were at school and I saw him in the holidays.

Healthcare

52. On first arrival, boys were sent to see matron for a check-up and to get a dose of cod liver oil. If you were ill you went to matron. I have no idea if she was medically qualified. I don't recall ever having to go and see her. She had a room on the second or third landing. I don't know if there were any beds in that room for sick children. I can't recall her name. I remember having to queue up for cod liver oil every term.
53. We went to see a doctor from outside for a routine check-up and I recall going to see this doctor twice. I don't know if any boys would ever be taken to hospital as I wasn't involved in anything like that. I don't know if health records were kept. I cannot recall ever seeing a dentist at school. I cannot recall any serious injuries that might have required medical attention.

Discipline

54. There were no grey areas in the discipline and it was very clear-cut. You get to learn the rules quickly and the consequences for breaking them. Once you received the

discipline it was over with and you moved on from it and there was no animosity from the monk.

55. I was caned by my housemaster, Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED]. The cane was wooden. I also got the strap, but that was from the teachers in classes and in front of everybody. It happened to other boys as well as me. That was a very thick leather belt. It was common practice amongst all of the teachers. The teachers would be either monks or the two lay teachers, Mr [REDACTED] MFH [REDACTED] or Mr [REDACTED] MIH [REDACTED]. The number of strokes you received depended on the person doing the strapping. I think the strap went to six strikes only, but the cane could be more than that.
56. As a group we were beaten, by Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED], one by one, and not in front of the others. I had to stand outside his room with the other boys and we entered the room one by one. Other boys were aware of what was going to happen and we didn't talk about it. It was normal and not out of the ordinary behaviour so why would we talk about it. I think the mass caning happened about twice per term, but the individual caning of me happened more often. That happened regularly during each term.
57. The school prefects didn't administer any caning. They might have looked over our homework or our lines. Some were bullies. I was never sent to the prefect for caning or punishments. They were all older boys. There was a pecking order in the school and if an older boy told you to do something then you did it.

Abuse at Fort Augustus Abbey School

58. Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] was a very loud man with a very deep voice. He played the [REDACTED]. I think he was from Australia. He used to call me "boy" in a very deep voice. I was caned a lot by him and for no reason. Sometimes I deserved it because I'd broken the rules such as being late, missing something, a class or producing poor homework. It was always Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] who caned me. He was my housemaster at the time.

59. I think the individual caning of me by Father [REDACTED] MEV started after I was at the school for a couple of terms, but I can't be sure. Then it happened throughout the time I was at the school at the same frequency. It was always done in the same manner. When he caned me he didn't say anything to me at the same time. He didn't speak to me about it afterwards, it was like nothing had happened.
60. There were also intimate times when I thought Father [REDACTED] MEV was great and he made me toast and butter in the housemaster's office. I can't recall now if that was a private room where he stayed or if it was purely an office. My mother has told me, after I saw the documentary, that I used to say, when I was at school, that the toast and butter was "in his room" and she assumed it was his private room, but I don't remember. I just remember the buttered toast. I was always alone with him when he gave me the toast. That made it special.
61. I was always caned alone. Father [REDACTED] MEV would say "boy" or [REDACTED] MOH and I had to go to his room. I had to strip off and he told me to do it. He wanted me to feel the cane and he didn't want my clothes to dampen the feeling of the cane. He didn't say those words, and it is what I now assume were the reasons for me being told to take my clothes off. Taking off all of my clothes included my underwear. I had to bend over or hold on to the back of a chair. He would give me instructions.
62. First, Father [REDACTED] MEV would rub his hands on my backside and caress it as that was where he was going to hit me. He did this every time and then I was caned. Instinctively, I would move my hand to the area of skin being caned and then I'd get it more. He didn't speak to me when he caned me. Then he told me it was over and I was told to put my clothes on and I left the room. I would then go back to the dorm room.
63. The number of strokes depended on Father [REDACTED] MEV and it could be for anything. There were no circumstances that dictated that. The strokes were hard and there was always more than one stroke. Maybe four or five strokes. I learned to hold on tight. I didn't cry. If I reacted to the caning I would get more. I had bruises as a result of being caned.

64. Afterwards I would try to avoid Father [REDACTED] MEV and turn away from him if I saw him on the stairs, but he knew my routine. The caning would not be brought up in conversation the next day. His room was at the top of the stairs directly opposite the landing. Sometimes he'd be waiting at the top of the stairs and he'd just say "boy" and it meant I'd have to go to his room. I wouldn't have done anything wrong. Sometimes I wasn't even alone when he called me. I thought at the time it was normal and that's just what happened at school and I thought everyone had it. All the boys had bruises at some stage. There was always someone else I'd see in the showers who had bruises. No-one talked about it.
65. Sometimes there was a mass caning and boys from my dorm would be lined up outside Father [REDACTED] MEV room and enter individually. On these occasions he did not tell me to strip and I would have my clothes on. Then a few days later, he'd say to me "come and have some toast" and I'd get buttered toast from him. I was so relieved that it was just toast and butter, I almost ran to his room. I just wanted him to like me. Having the toast and butter in his room was also a constant event.
66. I never did any school activities in school with Father [REDACTED] MEV on my own. As a house we had trips like organised skiing and he may have been involved with the skiing trip, and that is the only thing I recall.
67. I never went to see matron because of the bruises. I didn't tell anyone about the caning, but people knew you'd been caned because they could see the bruises. It was normal. Other monks would have been aware of what he was like and I know that now. I know that from having seen the Sine of or Fathers documentary and from new reports. Father [REDACTED] MEV was moved from Australia to Scotland because of his behaviour and he was moved back to Australia again. I know this because of the Australian Royal Commission report into child abuse and from news reports.

Peer abuse

68. There was a boiler room just off or opposite the showering area that was called the fight room and that is where boys went to fight each other to sort out issues. That was an arrangement between the boys themselves, but it was never stopped. It was just something that happened. I don't know if the monks knew about the fights, but no-one tried to stop it and the fights were common knowledge amongst the boys and I suspect the monks knew.
69. There was a lot of bullying going on, and if you were weak it was hell. The dormitory was a scary place with a lot of bullying and when the lights went out the bullies ran the dorm. Some boys left after one term as they cried all night because of the bullying. We knew there were boys who were homesick. They hated the school and couldn't cope with it. The boys didn't speak about how they were feeling. There were never any conversations about homesickness or how we might deal with it or even recognition of it by teachers. I wasn't homesick myself. No-one could afford to be soft. I was fortunate in a way that I was always able to stand up for myself. If you can hurt a bully he will prefer not to pick on you in future as he will get hurt himself. I am sure the monks would have been aware of the bullying as they knew everything that was going on, but in all of the time I was there it never stopped.
70. I don't recall any lectures about bullying. It was part of the system. The bullying could mean taking your pocket money, shoving you around, hitting you, a slap round the head, being told to clean another boys boots. I can picture boys being pummelled with pillows and feet in the dorm. I'm not aware of that happening in the presence of monks. I believe they knew it happened as they would come up to the dorm if they thought there was too much talking going on. Then we'd have to go downstairs to get the cane.
71. I think there was a system whereby younger boys were used as skivvies by the older boys at the school and there was some of that going on, but not much. There were bullies more than anything. I know that there were much older boys who would step in if they saw bullying behaviour. There were some boys like that as they weren't all bad.

72. There wasn't anyone inside of the school or outside of it that I could have spoken to if I had any concerns about the bullying. I didn't even think it was a concern, I just thought it was how life at school was.

Leaving Fort Augustus Abbey School

73. I left the school at the age of fifteen. I think this was in 1975, at the end of the school year. I was taken out of school by my mum as she had divorced my dad and returned to live in the UK. She took the three of us out of boarding school and took us to live with her in Southport. My sister had been studying at Kilgraston School and my young brother had been at Carlekemp in North Berwick. I was upset about having to leave Fort Augustus School.

Life after being at Fort Augustus Abbey School

74. I went to live with my mum and brother and sister in Southport. We had not lived as a family since I was aged nine. It was a difficult time for the family because of the divorce and my mum suddenly had three teenage children to take care of. It was a traumatic time for all of us. I went to a local school and took exams there. I didn't keep in touch with anyone I had been at Fort Augustus with. It was a tough time at home and I was being obnoxious and rebellious and wasn't a nice person and thought 'to hell with everything'.
75. I found a job and left home at the age of sixteen-and-a-half. I had already been working part-time with a local vets practice and I then went to work full-time at a breeding kennels and I could live on the premises. My mum accepted it and she drove me there. I have lived independently ever since.
76. I have been divorced twice and I was going through a third divorce process but my wife and I have worked through that. I have also had numerous relationships over the years and none of those succeeded. My first marriage when I was twenty-four lasted

about eighteen months. I came home and the house was empty and I was left with the very bare minimum of essentials I might need to live on for one person. It was very devastating for me. My wife had told me many times that 'we don't connect'. I've had a number of girlfriends over the years that have said the same thing to me. I have no concept of emotions and don't know how to respond to another person who is upset.

77. I remarried fourteen years later. We built a great life together in Scotland and had a fantastic house that we'd built ourselves. Out of the blue my wife told me that she wanted a divorce. There was no warning of this. I lost everything. She also told me that 'we don't connect'. I was working in a well-paid employment with McDonalds and had to leave the job. I felt broken. I had some money from the sale of the house and bought a flat in Edinburgh. When I left my job I spent a year travelling the world.
78. Then miraculously I met my current wife, [REDACTED] and we married after couple of years of meeting. We married in 2004 and are still together and have three children. Around seven years ago, the same thing happened and my wife told me she wanted a divorce for the same reasons. I felt desperate at this time and had suicidal thoughts. I was planning to take my own life and was in the process of saying my goodbyes to my children and my wife woke up and spoke to me, it was only this conversation that prevented me from going through with it.
79. We went to relationship counselling through a church we are involved in. I was also seeing a psychiatrist to work on my own issues and she suggested I should go on a retreat that was about exploring pain.
80. There was one exercise which required me to write down all the things that I know about affection that I learned from my parents. There were between fifteen and twenty adults in the room and they were all writing things down while I sat with a blank piece of paper and couldn't think of one thing. I thought to myself, this is not normal and I was asked if I understood the question. I could not think of one sign of affection. I knew that wasn't true as I had a very loving family. It came as a huge shock for me. I went back to my psychiatrist and she told me something was blocking my memory and I

must have had some trauma. I couldn't figure it out. Sometime after that I stopped seeing the psychiatrist.

81. Then, around one year after the retreat, I saw a piece on BBC about Fort Augustus on TV called 'The Sins of Our Fathers'. I was living in The Netherlands at the time. I'd always maintained that I enjoyed my time at the Fort August Abbey School and my time there was fantastic. When I told my mother after the documentary about what had happened to me at the school she was devastated as I'd always told her how lovely Father MEV was when he gave me toast and butter in his room. She thought it was strange at the time, but thought nothing more of it.
82. After we married I had to start again financially and for years we had no money [REDACTED] was working as a teacher and I had no business and I had to start a new one from scratch. We were desperate for money for some time. I had built up a good pension from my years working for McDonalds. When the rules were relaxed on withdrawing money from pensions I was able to take the money to prevent our house being taken. Now I have invested in a new business and it has taken off and is doing well. I used the money from my pension pot to build the current business and pay off our debts. Now, financially we are ok but it has been tough and I have no pension to rely on in future.

Impact

83. I have a lot of blanks in my memories of Fort Augustus and I believe this is nature's way of protecting me. I have been through a lot of therapy and cannot recall the name of the type of therapy I have received. The therapist plays sounds to bring back memories and then fills it with things that make you feel better. I started this but then had to stop as I had so many things happening in my life at the time with starting the new business.
84. When I saw Father MEV on the TV I started shaking and crying. It was an immediate response. I didn't understand why it was happening as the feelings came

from nowhere. I didn't recognise him because he was older, but his voice was the same. My memories began to return to the surface. His behaviour to me as a child clearly wasn't normal, but I didn't quite understand that. We began talking about it after the clip was shown and we discussed my reaction to it and how that was clearly not normal. I was defending him and saying "this is normal".

85. My wife and my close friends told me my reaction wasn't normal behaviour and I'm not to blame. That was the start of the process of us understanding each other more and we discovered my emotional blockage was because of this. When I saw the documentary, it came out of the blue and it had a profound effect on me and I returned to see the psychiatrist. I saw her a few times. She wrote a brief report to the police that detailed her observations of me and my issues with what came out of Fort Augustus.
86. Seeing the psychiatrist after I watched the documentary was helpful, but starting up the new business meant I was so busy that it didn't feel like the best time to go about unlocking more memories and I only saw her a few times. I could have unlocked a lot more stress and emotions and I want to avoid doing this. I can just about live with how I feel now, but I don't want to find out if something worse happened.
87. It saved my marriage as my wife [REDACTED] realised I was not behaving normally and she now supports me. I talked to her about what happened to me at Fort Augustus. Now, I have to write down reminders that I love my children and that I have to hug them. I am trying to learn. When my wife cries I don't know how to respond. I know that it's not my fault, but it has affected my life and it is still difficult at times. My wife has normal feelings and emotions and I can't offer her support, but since the documentary we know the cause. It saved our marriage.
88. My brother and sister are normal and I was brought up in a loving family. I don't have bad thoughts about Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] He damaged me and that has had a big impact. I don't hate him. The Order allowed him to do what he did, there are other people responsible for his actions and they could have prevented it and didn't. I acknowledge that he hurt me, but I have no animosity towards him. I get so angry at the others, but I can't get angry at him. I used to like him and that has stopped, and

now I have real anger about how his conduct was covered up. I want the people who knew about him, and others like him, and did nothing about it to be focussed on. They moved the monks around and I'm angry at them. I should be angry at him, but I'm not. I want to see him in prison, but the focus of my anger is on the people who are accountable. I gather his extradition to Scotland is based on my account and one other person's.

89. With regard to the behaviour of Father **MEZ** I know his behaviour wasn't normal when he tried to touch boys' backs. It wasn't normal. Then it was a silly thing that he did and it seemed creepy then. Boys would say 'there's Father **MEZ** Watch out for your back'. But it was just Father **MEZ** and it's what he did.
90. Now I avoid thinking back to my time at Fort Augustus. We don't talk about it at home. It is only in my conversations with my lawyer or communication with the Inquiry that I have to think about it and I deal with the practicalities only. I don't 'go there' mentally as I hate the way I feel. I had two nightmares in the run up to meeting with the Inquiry to give my statement. In one of them I had to go to Father **MEV** study to slit boys throats. The second one, all of my homes were being burnt to the ground. I don't normally have nightmares. I normally make myself very busy with work and I don't talk about it to my wife. Two close friends know about it and my immediate family and that's it.
91. In summary, my experiences at Fort Augustus have profoundly affected my relationships and harmed them. There has also been an enormous financial impact.

Reporting of Abuse

92. I made a report to the police a couple of days after I saw the BBC clip. I was in a terrible state. I phoned them up and had a conversation on the telephone. I have the details in an email. Within a month they came over to The Netherlands and took a statement from me. There were two officers. Then they left. I think this was sometime in 2013.

93. They then said they were looking into it. The police must have passed the matter to the Procurator Fiscal's office and I don't know when that was. I don't hear from the Fiscal's office for months at a time. They gave me a contact number for whenever I wanted help, but the help is not there. They gave me a liaison officer, Alison McKenzie, and I leave phone messages and I leave messages through their switchboard and they assure me the liaison officer will get back to me and she doesn't. I send email after email. Then I get a letter to say the investigation is ongoing and they can't tell me anymore. I wrote some really stern emails, and made a complaint, asking why they don't return my calls and I got no letters or phone calls in return. I can make these emails and responses available to the Inquiry if required. The attitude of the authorities to my case and to my concerns has been very disappointing and have added to the emotional impact on me and continues to do so. I would like to emphasise that the issues I have had with the service I received has been ongoing for many, many months.
94. I managed to speak with someone in the Fiscal's office and I told them about my frustrations and they were shocked this was happening, but it continued. They gave me another person's name to contact and he apologised, but nothing is done to correct the behaviour of the liaison officer. I've now had several liaison officers and I get the same response. Now, I get a letter every six months to tell me that nothing more has happened.
95. Two or three months ago the Australian authorities agreed to extradite Father MEV to Scotland. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] Now I get some updates, and there have been two in the last year. It is a very poor service and I have to do my own research such as in Australian newspaper reports. I have instructed

solicitors with regard to my criminal case and they cannot get any more information than me.

96. Now the extradition case is managed by a Fiscal Depute, Gertie Wallace, and she has been very good at keeping me updated with progress and feel more reassured. She is not a Liaison Officer. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] extradition from Australia. I put my concerns to her. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

97. I was initially instructing solicitors in England and they were very slow. They do not have a base in Scotland so I went to see a Scottish lawyer. The second lawyer applied to the English Benedictine Order on my behalf and in August 2018 I was offered £7000 in compensation. He tried to force me to take it. I was appalled that was the value they put on me. The lawyer said it was the best I would get and that they would take money from me for their costs if I didn't take it. There was no acceptance of liability. It was a goodwill gesture only. The lawyer also told me, if I didn't take it I would probably get much less in any future offer.

98. I then instructed a different firm of solicitors who are now representing me on a civil action and an application to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, CICA. I have received no acknowledgement from the Order. They claim they had no control or power over what happened at Fort Augustus Abbey school. But they appoint every headmaster. On the website for the English Benedictine Order they clearly refer to Fort Augustus and they were involved with it, so I believe there is no way they can say it was independent of them.

Records

99. I understand that the Order destroyed a lot of their records in wheelbarrows of documents that were burned by the monks and I believe this included records from Fort Augustus. I have not myself asked the Order for my records. I very much doubt

that my mum will still have the letters I wrote to her from boarding school or the reports I received.

Lessons to be Learned

100. There should be an independent body with power to talk to kids. We can no longer trust the Catholic church or large organisations to manage themselves. They have safeguarding programmes now, but they still hide people and move people around. The Catholic church have so much power that no government will take them to task. They know they can hide things. The Pope told people not to talk about abuse in the USA and until we have a legal process that makes that happen it won't be spoken of.
101. There has never been a consequence to their actions, and they simply offer people £7000 in compensation to go away and nothing more comes out of the claim. The abuse will be happening now as I believe the church continues to fail to protect vulnerable children from paedophile priests. There is not 100% safeguarding in place for children in Catholic schools as there is no accountability.

Hopes for the Inquiry

102. I hope the Inquiry Report will deal with the fact that the English Benedictine Order knew about Father MEV and they did nothing about it, but they maintain they are not accountable for his behaviour. That is not right. The Order is good at doing nothing. The English Benedictine Order was in overall control and they knew about problems in Fort Augustus and knew it was a place for them to hide paedophile priests. They should be held accountable for his actions.

Other information

103. I now know a man called [REDACTED] He is very committed to the cause of finding the truth and is very knowledgeable regarding the history of abuse in the Catholic church in Australia and in the UK. [REDACTED] I am a member of that group along with a number of other former pupils from Fort Augustus School.

104. 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.

MOH

Signed..... [REDACTED]

Dated..... 19/6/2019