

1 Friday, 13 September 2019

2 (10.00 am)

3 LADY SMITH: Good morning.

4 Ms MacLeod, I think we have a witness ready; is that  
5 right?

6 MS MACLEOD: Good morning, my Lady, we do. The next witness  
7 is George Campbell.

8 GEORGE CAMPBELL (sworn)

9 LADY SMITH: George, please sit down and make yourself  
10 comfortable.

11 I think that microphone is picking you up nicely.  
12 If I could ask you to stay in that position, that would  
13 be really helpful. If you're ready, I'll hand over to  
14 Ms MacLeod and she will explain what happens next.

15 Questions from Ms MacLEOD

16 MS MACLEOD: Good morning, George.

17 A. Good morning.

18 Q. Are you George Campbell?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Were you born in 1953?

21 A. I was.

22 Q. You have provided a statement to the inquiry and there's  
23 a copy of the statement in the red file in front of you  
24 on the desk. It'll also come up on the screen. I'll  
25 give the reference of the statement for the transcript:

1 BEN.001.004.4304.

2 Can I begin by asking you to look at the last page  
3 of the statement in the folder in front of you. Have  
4 you signed the statement?

5 A. I have.

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 A. Yes.

10 Q. Do you go on to say:

11 "I believe the facts stated in this witness  
12 statement are true"?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. In the statement I think you tell us that you attended  
15 Fort Augustus Abbey School from 1965 to 1970.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Is that when you were aged between 12 and 17?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. I think you also tell us you're now a solicitor living  
20 in Glasgow.

21 A. That's correct, yes.

22 Q. [REDACTED]

23 [REDACTED]

24 A. I did, yes.

25 Q. [REDACTED]

1

[REDACTED]

2

A. Over different times, yes.

3

Q. I think you mention you have [REDACTED]

4

[REDACTED]

5

A. That's correct, yes.

6

Q. From your statement -- and in fact I think you say this

7

in terms -- you say:

8

"My experience at Fort Augustus was broadly

9

positive."

10

A. Yes.

11

Q. You felt you got on well with the other boys and the

12

monks?

13

A. Indeed, yes.

14

Q. But one thing you say is that you didn't enjoy being

15

away from home?

16

A. No, I didn't, no.

17

Q. You give us some information in your statement about the

18

general routine, the times of the day that various

19

things happened, when you got up, and that kind of

20

thing. I don't need to ask you too much about the

21

detail of that because we can read that for ourselves.

22

A. Right.

23

Q. Can I ask you a little bit about visits. Did you have

24

visits from your parents or other family when you were

25

at the school?

1 A. Yes. It was a very strict rule that you were only  
2 allowed one visit per half term. I remember thinking it  
3 was strange when I started because it was emphasised in  
4 letters to my parents, who already knew this from having  
5 had [REDACTED] go there. But it was quite  
6 an important rule that you only had one visit per  
7 half-term.

8 Q. So they really weren't allowed to visit, even if they  
9 were able to, outwith those times?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Were your parents living in Scotland at the time?

12 A. Yes, they lived in [REDACTED].

13 Q. So they weren't too far away really from the school?

14 A. No.

15 Q. You tell us that sport was an important aspect of the  
16 school; is that right?

17 A. Oh yes, indeed, very much so.

18 Q. And were you into sport yourself?

19 A. I was, but I was quite a -- I got off to a bad start.  
20 Just before I started at the abbey I fell out of a tree  
21 and fractured my pelvis, so I was always a bit behind  
22 everybody else. I never really got up to full fitness  
23 until long after I'd left school.

24 Q. Was that something, your injury, that the school knew  
25 about?

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. And how did they cope with that, how was that dealt  
3 with?
- 4 A. It was fairly early on in the summer, so by the time  
5 I started at the abbey I was pretty much -- it had  
6 pretty much healed up but I never found myself able to  
7 get really as fit as a lot of my classmates.
- 8 Q. How would you describe the general regime at the school?
- 9 A. It was strict. But you always knew where you stood with  
10 everybody, which -- it started to change in fifth year,  
11 which is why I left in fifth year and didn't do the full  
12 six years.
- 13 Q. We'll come on to look at that shortly.
- 14 In terms of how the school was set up, I think you  
15 mention that there were different houses. Can you tell  
16 me about that?
- 17 A. There were two houses when I was there. I think  
18 latterly a new house -- Lovat and Vaughan were the two  
19 houses.
- 20 Q. Which were you in?
- 21 A. I was in Vaughan. Then I think in my last year or two,  
22 Junior House was started.
- 23 Q. So when you started at the school, you went straight  
24 into Vaughan, there wasn't a junior house?
- 25 A. That's correct, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]  
Q. Who was your housemaster in Vaughan?

A. Father [REDACTED] MFG [REDACTED].

Q. How would you describe him?

A. He was a likeable fellow, but he could be a bit temperamental. He was a workaholic, he took on far too much, and I think that's probably what led to his death at about the age of 50 or 51.

Q. Did he die while you were at the school?

A. No, just after I left. A few years later.

LADY SMITH: As a child, what was it about him or what he was doing that indicated to you that he was a workaholic and he did too much? Can you give me some examples?

A. Yes. He was heavily into drama, so he would organise plays, supervise all the rehearsals, he would even make up the costumes himself for the whole cast. He would do -- he was into supervising sport, he was [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I think he was also -- he did the choir. He was into everything. I met his brother not long after he died and he told me it was his opinion that his brother was worked too hard.

LADY SMITH: Thank you. That helps.

MS MACLEOD: Who was the [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] or the [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] at the school when you started?

A. Father [REDACTED] MKT [REDACTED].

- 1 Q. How would you describe him?
- 2 A. I got on well with him most of the time. He could be  
3 prone to losing his temper now and again. But  
4 similarly, if he was in a bad mood, he could switch back  
5 to being very light-hearted and relaxed but most of the  
6 time I got on well with him.
- 7 Q. And if he lost his temper, what kind of things would  
8 lead to him losing his temper?
- 9 A. Oh, let's see. I think -- latterly, I think tensions  
10 must have been building up in the monastery, I think  
11 numbers had been falling, I think things weren't looking  
12 all that great, and he would come into the monastery --  
13 and on one occasion I was in -- I think it was the end  
14 of term, I was in the playroom with a friend of mine.  
15 It was very hot and he was climbing up the wall trying  
16 to open a skylight window because the cord had snapped.  
17 Father MKT came in and started bawling at him.  
18 He was trying to pull a hockey stick out from behind the  
19 radiator pipes, presumably to have a swing at him, but  
20 he couldn't do it, and eventually frustration -- he  
21 stopped and turned round and then he noticed me sitting  
22 in the corner for the first time and just glared at me,  
23 "As for you, Fat Campbell, you make me sick", and  
24 stormed out of the door.
- 25 Q. When you say he was trying to get a hockey stick from

1 behind the radiator and he couldn't do it, was that that  
2 he couldn't physically remove it?

3 A. He couldn't remove it, yes, and he was getting more and  
4 more frustrated.

5 Q. I see. Did there come a time when there was a change  
6 in the SNR ?

7 A. Yes. In my last year, I think Father MFF came  
8 back. He'd been the SNR when [REDACTED]  
9 started at the abbey and he came back.

10 Q. Did you notice any change in the routine or the regime  
11 of the school under Father MFF ?

12 A. I think things started to relax a bit, which ... He had  
13 a reputation, [REDACTED], as having been  
14 a very strict disciplinarian, but the regime relaxed,  
15 I think, quite a bit when he came back.

16 I think Father MFG expelled me over a dispute  
17 about haircuts in Father MFF absence, but over the  
18 course of the weekend, Father MFF returned to the  
19 school and the expulsion was cancelled and I never heard  
20 anything more about it.

21 Q. This was during the period that MFF was the  
22 SNR --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. -- and Father MKT was still at the school?

25 A. I don't think he was still there, no, I think he may



1           have left.

2           LADY SMITH: Tell me about this dispute regarding haircuts;  
3           what happened?

4           A. At the abbey you always ... We had haircuts, it was  
5           a short back and sides, a rather severe short back and  
6           sides, and in the 1970s that was -- when you went home  
7           for the holidays, you were seriously out of fashion with  
8           all your friends from home. We asked the head boy to  
9           raise it with the headmaster that we would like to go  
10          home with our hair a little bit longer. But nothing  
11          happened and when I was going for my haircut, I refused,  
12          and that was what led to the problem arising.

13          MS MACLEOD: What happened when you refused?

14          A. I was due to sit a history test paper for my Higher  
15          history and Father **MFG** wouldn't let me go to it. So  
16          I was stuck in, I think, his room.

17          Q. So did you miss the test?

18          A. No, I got the last hour. I agreed to have my hair cut  
19          and I went down for the last hour of the exam.

20          Q. So you missed part of the exam?

21          A. It was a three-hour exam and I got one hour.

22          Q. Then from there, how did you end up being expelled?

23          A. It was Father -- I can't remember how exactly that  
24          happened. The headmaster was away at the time and  
25          Father **MFG** was in charge.

- 1 Q. Father [REDACTED] MFG ?
- 2 A. Father [REDACTED] MFG was in charge, yes, and it was he who  
3 told me I was going to have to get the ... go back,  
4 I was to be sent home to [REDACTED]. This was a Friday or  
5 something like that, and it was going to be on the  
6 Monday. But I think the reason for that was I think he  
7 wanted to wait until the headmaster came back. So as  
8 I say, when the headmaster did come back, nothing more  
9 was said about it.
- 10 Q. Father [REDACTED] MFC is someone you mention in your  
11 statement. What was his role at the school?
- 12 A. When I arrived in first year, he was our [REDACTED] teacher.  
13 He took sport, he took -- I remember he took us for  
14 hockey, and he would occasionally take us out on runs,  
15 which were -- when the weather was too bad for playing  
16 on the pitches, we were generally sent out on a run  
17 round the country roads round about Fort Augustus.
- 18 Q. What was he like? What are your memories of him?
- 19 A. Very affable, I got on very well with him. He was quite  
20 relaxed, he was never very strict on anybody, and he was  
21 quite well liked.
- 22 Q. Father [REDACTED] MEZ is someone else you mention.
- 23 A. Oh yes, yes.
- 24 Q. What was his role in the school?
- 25 A. [REDACTED] He was very likeable. He's the only person

1           there -- he actually slapped me once in the face, which  
2           was totally out of character for him, but I'd been  
3           slightly taking the mickey a little bit behind his back  
4           and he caught me, so I had no complaints.

5           Q.   Father [REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED] is another monk that you refer to;  
6           what was his role?

7           A.   He taught [REDACTED] He was also [REDACTED] and he  
8           did a lot of things, made his own ginger beer, which  
9           he'd share with the pupils, if it hadn't exploded by  
10          that time, which seemed to be a common occurrence. But  
11          he was very -- he had a good sense of humour and was  
12          quite well liked.

13          Q.   Did you get on quite well with him?

14          A.   Yes. I still do. It's a few years since I last saw him  
15          up in [REDACTED] but I always got on well with him.

16          Q.   You mention the abbot: who was the abbot when you were  
17          at the school?

18          A.   The first one was Celestine Haworth and he was replaced  
19          by Nicholas Holman who, if I remember rightly, was  
20          imposed on the community because the monks themselves  
21          for the first time ever, possibly, couldn't agree on the  
22          appointment of one of their own number as abbot.

23          Q.   Is he somebody that came from elsewhere to be the abbot?

24          A.   Yes.

25          Q.   Can you remember roughly during your time in the school

- 1           when that was?
- 2       A. I would be probably in about third year.
- 3       Q. From what you can remember, did the abbot have much to  
4           do with the school?
- 5       A. No. Virtually nothing.
- 6       Q. You touched on earlier there being a decline in numbers,  
7           I think, during your time in the school.
- 8       A. Yes.
- 9       Q. When you arrived in 1965, what's your memory of the  
10           numbers of boys?
- 11      A. I remember, actually, I did count them up because the  
12           school roll was up on a noticeboard in several places.  
13           I remember I counted them up once and it was 162.  
14           I think that was the peak of the school numbers.
- 15      Q. What was your impression then of the decline? When was  
16           there a decline in the numbers?
- 17      A. For me, it started in about fourth year. You didn't  
18           know where you stood with people. Rules that you'd had  
19           for years were being discarded. Things that you'd  
20           worked for to achieve over the years were now being  
21           given out willy-nilly, anybody just had them for the  
22           asking, privileges that you earned as you got older were  
23           just opened up to everybody.
- 24      LADY SMITH: Tell us about these privileges.
- 25      A. How often you could go out into the village, that sort

1 of thing, the dress code for going out, that sort of  
2 thing. I'm struggling to remember now. How late you  
3 could watch television, something like that. Nothing  
4 really major.

5 MS MACLEOD: What was your impression at the time of what  
6 was causing this change?

7 A. At the time it seemed to be -- I felt they were in  
8 difficulties in the monastery and this was affecting the  
9 monks who were becoming a bit more short-tempered, a bit  
10 more ... not so pleasant as they'd been.

11 Q. How was that affecting the situation with the  
12 privileges?

13 A. I think they were trying to modernise. I seem to  
14 remember round about that time they banned the use of  
15 the belt -- that was quite late on in my time there --  
16 and that wasn't one of the changes I objected to by any  
17 means.

18 Q. Who did you feel was making those changes? Who was in  
19 charge of that?

20 A. I suppose it was Father MFF, SNR with the  
21 housemasters. I'm trying to think who was ...  
22 Father MFG was my housemaster and I think  
23 Father MFC possibly was the Lovat housemaster.  
24 I didn't feel comfortable there any more and that's why  
25 I asked my parents if I could leave.

1           They came down, we had a meeting with  
2           Father [REDACTED] MFG , and at the end of the meeting I was  
3           walking down the corridor behind my parents when I heard  
4           my father turn to my mother and say, "George is right,  
5           the sooner he's out of here the better".

6           LADY SMITH: Just going back to your memory of the belt  
7           being banned. I think you told us you left in 1970;  
8           is that right?

9           A. That's right, yes.

10          LADY SMITH: At what point in your time at the school do you  
11          think it was that the use of the belt was banned?

12          A. I have a funny feeling it was quite late on, very near  
13          the end. I don't remember ever getting it in my last  
14          year or two at the abbey, and I'd have got it fairly  
15          often before then.

16          LADY SMITH: Can you remember how you came to know that its  
17          use had been banned?

18          A. I don't, no. I don't remember, I'm afraid.

19          LADY SMITH: But it's a memory you obviously have from your  
20          time at the school?

21          A. Yes. I'm hoping that I'm not getting it mixed up with  
22          what [REDACTED] told me because he stayed on for  
23          two or three years after I left.

24          LADY SMITH: When did he leave?

25          A. He was [REDACTED] and he did the full

1           six years.

2           LADY SMITH: So he'd have left in about [REDACTED]?

3           A. [REDACTED]

4           LADY SMITH: So the belt, to your knowledge, was banned  
5           either by 1970 or at the very least -- some time between  
6           1970 and 1974?

7           A. I think so, but there was no major mention of it that  
8           I can recall, it just faded away.

9           LADY SMITH: That's very helpful. Thank you.

10          MS MACLEOD: Did a number of other boys leave the school  
11          around the same time you did?

12          A. Yes, from my year, a very large percentage of my year  
13          left at the same time as me.

14          Q. How many boys had there been in your year roughly?

15          A. I think it was roughly about 30.

16          Q. And how many of them do you think left?

17          A. I think about 10 or 12.

18          Q. Which year would that have been?

19          A. That was at the end of my fifth year.

20          Q. So 1970?

21          A. Yes.

22          Q. A description you give -- in your statement you say:

23                 "We became disenchanted."

24          A. Yes.

25          Q. Was that something the boys discussed amongst

- 1 themselves?
- 2 A. Yes. The haircuts issue was something that really  
3 annoyed everybody, that the head boy was supposed to  
4 have taken this up with the school on our behalf and  
5 never did, so that rankled quite a bit.
- 6 Q. I just want to go back to something you said about your  
7 understanding at the time that there were some  
8 difficulties in the monastery. Did you have any  
9 understanding of what kind of difficulties there were?
- 10 A. Yes, I remember numbers, because I remember -- I think  
11 it was an old boys' weekend and [REDACTED]  
12 was visiting and I remember being in conversation with  
13 him and [REDACTED] MKT [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] asked him, "Is  
14 it not a problem that numbers in the monastery are  
15 falling?" and he said, "Oh, no, no, no, nothing like  
16 that at all, not a problem, no". He dismissed the  
17 suggestion.
- 18 Q. Can I ask you then, George, about discipline at the  
19 school. You've told me that there was a change in that  
20 towards the end of your time, but if we start with how  
21 things were at first when you got to the school, who was  
22 in charge of discipline?
- 23 A. Your housemaster.
- 24 Q. So for you that would be --
- 25 A. Father [REDACTED] MFG [REDACTED].



- 1 Q. And for the other house?
- 2 A. In my first year, it would be Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED].
- 3 Q. You mentioned there was a third house that came into  
4 operation for younger boys, do you recall who the  
5 housemaster was there?
- 6 A. Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED], if I remember. I think  
7 Father [REDACTED] MFC [REDACTED] initially, then he moved to take over  
8 Lovat from Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] and I think Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED]  
9 then took on the junior house.
- 10 Q. So how was discipline managed then for you, with your  
11 own housemaster, Father [REDACTED] MFG [REDACTED]?
- 12 A. What happened would be if you were caught doing anything  
13 wrong by one of the prefects, they would send you to  
14 your housemaster for punishment.
- 15 Q. And was there a particular time in the day when that  
16 punishment would be administered?
- 17 A. No, you just had to go along, knock on his door and see  
18 if he was in.
- 19 Q. What would happen if he was in?
- 20 A. You'd just go in and say who had sent you there and what  
21 for and you'd get belted.
- 22 Q. Which part of your body would be hit with the belt?
- 23 A. On the hand.
- 24 Q. How many strokes?
- 25 A. It was never more than six on each hand.

- 1 Q. Was it painful?
- 2 A. Yes. It wasn't excruciating, just -- it would sometimes  
3 leave a little mark, which you could ... The tawse had  
4 two prongs, so you could quite often imitate ... it  
5 would wrap round the back of your hand, so you soon  
6 learned to simulate it by licking your fingers and going  
7 back to your fingers and showing him the marks on the  
8 back of your hand and pretend that you'd been for the  
9 belt.
- 10 Q. Is that something you did?
- 11 A. Now and again.
- 12 Q. How often do you think you were belted by  
13 Father MFG? Was it on a weekly basis? How often?
- 14 A. Two or three times in a term perhaps. The bottom  
15 punishment -- the least punishment was getting lines, so  
16 for that you had to go to your housemaster and pay  
17 a ha'penny and he would give you a sheet of paper with  
18 his signature on the top that you had write your lines  
19 on. So that was -- I had that a few times.
- 20 Q. "Penance paper" I think you call it in your statement.
- 21 A. Yes. Then the belt was the next one, and the belt was  
22 known as a stick, and the top punishment was what we  
23 called the birch, which was a cane on the bottom.
- 24 LADY SMITH: Who would decide whether you were getting  
25 a penance paper, a belting or a caning?

1 A. I think if it was penance paper, the prefect would do  
2 that. And then I think they also -- if he felt it  
3 merited the belt, you'd be sent for the belt.

4 LADY SMITH: So did you have to tell your housemaster what  
5 the prefect had decided should be administered to you?

6 A. Yes.

7 LADY SMITH: So it's the prefect's judgement as to what type  
8 of punishment you should receive; is that right?

9 A. Of these two, yes. As far as I remember, there was  
10 no -- the cane was never their -- it was never within  
11 their authority to recommend that.

12 LADY SMITH: Who would decide that you were to get caned?

13 A. The housemaster or the headmaster.

14 LADY SMITH: I see.

15 MS MACLEOD: If you were to get caned, who would administer  
16 that punishment?

17 A. It only happened to me once and that was SNR  
18 that did it.

19 Q. Which of the two SNR

20 A. MKT

21 Q. Can you tell me about that one occasion? How did it  
22 come about?

23 A. I was shouting with somebody down the corridor when the  
24 SNR came in from the monastery. I had forgotten  
25 there was an exam going on in the adjoining room and he

1 got really mad at me for making a noise outside while  
2 the exam was going on, so he took me to his room. By  
3 the time we got there, I think he'd cooled off and I got  
4 four strokes. It was nothing particularly serious.

5 Q. On which part of your body?

6 A. On my bottom.

7 Q. Was that over your clothing?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Did you have any marks?

10 A. Not that I remember, no.

11 Q. Were you aware of other boys being caned by either

12 Father [MKT] or Father [MFF]?

13 A. Yes. [REDACTED] before I ever went to the  
14 abbey, I remember them talking about it with [REDACTED]  
15 [REDACTED] reckoned that by the time he was  
16 in third or fourth year, he must have had the school  
17 record for canings. But they were joking about it and  
18 [REDACTED] said that he wasn't far behind  
19 him.

20 Q. I think you said [REDACTED] was three years  
21 older.

22 A. He'd be about ... He was five ... [REDACTED] is  
23 three years younger.

24 Q. What about [REDACTED]

25 A. [REDACTED] was six years older. So when

1 I started my first year at primary school, he started  
2 his first year at the abbey.

3 Q. I see. When [REDACTED] were talking about  
4 receiving canings at the school, did you have an  
5 understanding of who was caning them?

6 A. It was the [REDACTED] SNR, it was Father [REDACTED] MFF.

7 Q. During your own time at the school were you aware of  
8 other boys being caned?

9 A. Very rarely, actually.

10 Q. I think what you tell us in your statement is that you  
11 didn't see anything beyond the discipline that you've  
12 described.

13 A. No, no, definitely.

14 Q. Were you aware of any bullying going on at the school?

15 A. Yes, it wasn't endemic, but I was ... I remember one of  
16 the things that browned me off was that a school bully  
17 was made head boy in my final year. That was something  
18 that really annoyed me. For example, I remember  
19 watching some event -- I can't remember what it was,  
20 maybe something to do with the cadets -- and this fellow  
21 came up and rugby tackled me from behind, and I managed  
22 to get ... He was a year or two years older than me,  
23 but I managed to get the better of him and then his  
24 friends came and rescued him from me before I did  
25 anything.

1 Q. Do you think the monks were aware that that boy was  
2 a bully?

3 A. I don't know. I really don't know.

4 Q. Okay.

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17 A. That's right. [REDACTED]

18 LADY SMITH: [REDACTED]

19 A. Yes.

20 LADY SMITH: [REDACTED]

21 A. Yes.

22 LADY SMITH: -- whenever his birthday was?

23 MS MACLEOD: You tell us in your statement, George, that as

24 far as you were concerned, there was no sexual abuse

25 whatsoever that you knew of at the school.

- 1 A. No, I didn't see anything, I didn't know of anything,  
2 I never heard of anything of that nature.
- 3 Q. One thing you tell us in paragraph 20 of your statement  
4 is that after you'd left the school, you remember once  
5 talking to a former pupil, who I think you say is now  
6 deceased, who was in [REDACTED] year at school.
- 7 A. Yes.
- 8 Q. Can I just understand from you, how long after you left  
9 school did you have this conversation?
- 10 A. It was only about two or three years ago and it was when  
11 the reports of abuse first started to come into the  
12 public domain.
- 13 Q. So if he was in [REDACTED] year, would he be  
14 about five years older than you?
- 15 A. Yes.
- 16 Q. What did this boy tell you?
- 17 A. He told me that the first boy who had been abused by,  
18 I think, Father Aidan Duggan -- he said, "I remember  
19 that", and he said, "We just laughed at him when we  
20 heard of it", and he said, "I've bitterly regretted that  
21 for the rest of my life".
- 22 Q. Did you understand from him whether he was talking there  
23 about Fort Augustus or Carlekemp?
- 24 A. Fort Augustus.
- 25 Q. When he said, "We just laughed at him", did you

1 understand that was laughing at Aidan Duggan or the boy?

2 A. The boy.

3 Q. So did you understand from this former pupil then that  
4 hearing about sexual abuse wasn't something that he took  
5 seriously at the time, but it was something he now  
6 regrets?

7 A. That's correct, yes.

8 Q. Did he say what he knew or what he was aware of at the  
9 time?

10 A. No. No, he didn't. He didn't go into that at all.

11 Q. Can you remember the words he used?

12 A. Not really. I remember he was quite clear that it was  
13 abuse of a sexual nature, but beyond that, he didn't go  
14 into any detail.

15 Q. Just to be clear, was it Aidan Duggan that you said  
16 there?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. You tell us that you used to go back -- I think you've  
19 mentioned this already -- to Fort Augustus for old boys'  
20 weekends.

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. On one of these occasions did you hear something about  
23 Father MEV?

24 A. Yes. It wasn't at the old boys' weekend; that was in  
25 Inverness. My maths teacher at the abbey left shortly



1 after I did and took up a position at the high school in  
2 Inverness. [REDACTED] and I would go into Inverness  
3 for a pint after we'd finished in [REDACTED] bar and  
4 we'd meet up with him there and he would tell me the odd  
5 story about what went on behind the scenes at the abbey  
6 and at the school. And he explained about -- he told me  
7 why Father [REDACTED] MEV had left the school or the abbey  
8 so suddenly.

9 Q. Had you known that Father [REDACTED] MEV had left the abbey  
10 suddenly?

11 A. I'm pretty sure I did, yes.

12 Q. What did your former maths teacher say to you about  
13 that?

14 A. He told me that Father [REDACTED] MEV had been caught by the  
15 police propositioning men in a public toilet in  
16 Inverness.

17 Q. What you tell us as well in your statement is:

18 "There was no suggestion of any impropriety at the  
19 school."

20 And that:

21 "Father [REDACTED] MEV was always proper with you."

22 A. Oh yes.

23 Q. We've touched on this already, but you tell us that you  
24 had good relations generally speaking with the monks --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- and the boys and that you continue to have friends  
2 from your time at the school?

3 A. Indeed, yes.

4 Q. You wrote a book.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

7 A. I'd always been interested in family history and  
8 I started off to do a book on family history, trying to  
9 connect -- my forebears were at Culloden. I got  
10 a couple of chapters done and I started to come on to  
11 stuff about Fort Augustus and I switched then to writing  
12 about Fort Augustus.

13 I bought a book online, which was written by one of  
14 the monks about 100 years ago. It was a history of  
15 Fort Augustus, and I thought I would like to update it,  
16 given that Fort Augustus was now, or at that time,  
17 becoming more of a tourist hotspot. I felt this would  
18 make an ideal subject to upgrade for tourists.

19 But the more I delved into it, the more information  
20 I found, and things started ... I came across  
21 information that was completely new to me, I'd never  
22 read anywhere.

23 Q. About Fort Augustus?

24 A. About Fort Augustus, and having been born and brought up  
25 in [REDACTED], going to school in Fort Augustus, I was quite

1 familiar with the background to both places, and very  
2 early on I realised that historians had got the two  
3 places mixed up in some of their accounts, so when  
4 I switched to the places back round to their right  
5 positions, a whole new line of history opened up. That  
6 got me started on that.

7 Q. What's the name of your book?

8 A. "The First and Lost Iona."

9 Q. Just to go back to something you said a few moments ago  
10 in relation to Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED], I think you  
11 said that you were pretty sure you knew already yourself  
12 that he had left the school suddenly.

13 A. I am pretty sure, yes, because I used to get [REDACTED]  
14 [REDACTED] was still there, so we were always kept  
15 up to date with developments, even after I left.

16 Q. So do I take it from that that he didn't leave suddenly  
17 during your time but that it may have been during [REDACTED]  
18 [REDACTED] time at the school?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And I think you've already told us that [REDACTED] was  
21 in the school until about 1974.

22 A. About then, yes.

23 MS MACLEOD: George, thank you very much for answering my  
24 questions today. Is there anything else that you  
25 yourself would like to add to what you've already told

1 us?

2 A. No, I think that's pretty much everything I can think  
3 of.

4 MS MACLEOD: Thank you. My Lady, I am not aware of any  
5 other questions for George.

6 LADY SMITH: Thank you. Are there any outstanding  
7 applications for questions? No.

8 George, that's everything we have to ask you today.  
9 Thank you very much for providing your evidence to us,  
10 both by providing a written statement in advance, it was  
11 very helpful, and coming along today to talk about your  
12 time at Fort Augustus and your knowledge of events  
13 there. It does help to add to the picture that we've  
14 been building over the last little while, so thank you  
15 for that. I'm now able to let you go.

16 A. Thank you.

17 (The witness withdrew)

18 LADY SMITH: Would it be helpful if we had a few minutes'  
19 break at this stage?

20 MS MACLEOD: That would be helpful.

21 LADY SMITH: Do we want to take an early morning break and  
22 sit again at 11.00?

23 MS MACLEOD: Yes, I think that would work well.

24 LADY SMITH: Let's do that.

25 (10.45 am)

1 (A short break)

2 (11.09 am)

3 LADY SMITH: Mr MacAulay.

4 MR MacAULAY: My Lady, the next witness is Colin Bryce.

5 COLIN BRYCE (sworn)

6 LADY SMITH: Please sit down, Colin, and make yourself  
7 comfortable.

8 You'll see there's a microphone there, for good  
9 reason: we need you to speak into the microphone,  
10 please, so that everyone can hear you and the  
11 stenographers, in particular, can listen carefully.

12 If you're ready, I'll hand over to Mr MacAulay and  
13 he'll explain what happens next.

14 Questions from MR MacAULAY

15 MR MacAULAY: Good morning, Colin.

16 In the red folder in front of you, you'll find your  
17 statement. Could I ask you to look at that? I'll give  
18 the reference for the transcript: BEN.001.004.4300.

19 If you could turn to the last page of the statement,  
20 can I ask you to confirm that you have signed the  
21 statement?

22 A. I have, thank you.

23 Q. Do you tell us in the last paragraph:

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

1                   Is that correct?

2           A.   That is correct.

3           Q.   Do you go on to say:

4                   "I believe the facts stated in this witness  
5                   statement are true"?

6           A.   That's correct, thank you.

7           Q.   Can you confirm that you were born in 1960?

8           A.   I was.

9           Q.   I think you tell us in your statement that you attended  
10               Fort Augustus Abbey School from 1971 to 1978.

11          A.   That's correct.

12          Q.   So that would be from the age of 11 to 18?

13          A.   Correct, 11 to 18, yes.

14          Q.   You begin by telling us in your statement that you had  
15               a very positive experience at Fort Augustus.

16          A.   I did, yes.

17          Q.   You go on to say in that connection:

18               "If you had either academic or sporting ability, you  
19               could find your place there"; is that correct?

20          A.   That is very much the case.

21          Q.   If you didn't have these abilities can you tell me what  
22               the position would be?

23          A.   Because everyone had to do sport, for example, those who  
24               had less sporting ability would struggle. They'd be  
25               forced on to the rugby pitch, they'd be going on runs,

1 and they didn't enjoy it. They'd probably be pushed  
2 around on the rugby pitch. So those who didn't have any  
3 sort of sporting ability hated sport and sport was very  
4 much part of our lives at the school. We did it  
5 generally sort of three or four days a week.

6 Likewise, those who didn't have academic ability,  
7 I guess they would flounder. There were single classes  
8 in the school so you were in one class and you had the  
9 bright ones at the top and those who didn't have the  
10 academic ability would be at the bottom of the class and  
11 there was no additional support provided for them.

12 Q. Where did you fit in then?

13 A. I was probably academically in the top, maybe, third.

14 I certainly wasn't at the top. Maybe in the borderline  
15 between the first and the second third.

16 Q. And I think you tell us you did have sporting ability?

17 A. I had sporting ability, fortunately.

18 Q. You also tell us that the school was "hard but fair";  
19 can you elaborate upon that comment?

20 A. It was hard in that you knew there were punishments, and  
21 you knew what you would get for those punishments. But  
22 in general, the punishments were given if you did  
23 something wrong. They weren't often given out without  
24 having done something to require the punishment to be  
25 given to you. So it was hard, the routine was -- you

1           knew the routine and because there was corporal  
2           punishment at the time you knew the boundaries of what  
3           you could do.

4           Q. We'll look at the punishments very shortly. I think you  
5           tell us that when you started at the age of 11, you were  
6           in fact at that time the youngest boy in the school.

7           A. I was the youngest and the shortest boy in the school.

8           Q. You were a day boy at that time?

9           A. I was.

10          Q. I think [REDACTED] one of the teachers at the  
11          school; is that correct?

12          A. That's correct. He moved up to Fort Augustus in 1971 to  
13          take up the post of maths teacher in the school.

14          Q. Although you were a day pupil, you became a boarder,  
15          I think, in your final year?

16          A. Correct, because when I moved into the sixth year I had  
17          additional responsibilities and I was limited by going  
18          home each evening. So [REDACTED] negotiated with the  
19          school that I could become a boarder for my final year.

20          Q. [REDACTED]  
21          attended the school?

22          A. [REDACTED] attended. He would have been -- he probably  
23          went into the third or fourth year -- the third year  
24          maybe. He was three years older than me. [REDACTED]

25          [REDACTED] I think attended for one year.



- 1 Q. Was [REDACTED] there when you arrived at the school?
- 2 A. Yes, he was. He would have joined in [REDACTED] 1971 and  
3 he would have left about 1975, I think.
- 4 Q. Was he a day boy as well?
- 5 A. He was a day boy the whole time, yes.
- 6 Q. Although you were a day boy, nevertheless did you have  
7 to fit into the routine of the school?
- 8 A. Very much so, apart from obviously the routine in the  
9 morning of getting up and getting ready for school. You  
10 had to be there for the school assembly and then,  
11 thereafter, lessons. Then I would go home at the end of  
12 the -- the school routine was such that it would finish  
13 late evening, sort of 9 o'clock, and then I would walk  
14 home at that point.
- 15 Q. And home was within walking distance?
- 16 A. It was within walking distance, in the village.
- 17 Q. What about during the day, would you pop home on the odd  
18 occasion?
- 19 A. I wouldn't go home during the day.
- 20 Q. Looking to the role religion played in the school,  
21 I think you tell us a little bit about that, in  
22 particular that on a Sunday Mass was compulsory even  
23 although you were a day boy?
- 24 A. That's correct. We always went to Mass on Sunday  
25 mornings. That was the one day we wore our red blazers.

1           Everyone went to Mass on Sundays regardless of whether  
2           they were a day pupil or not, yes.

3           Q.   What about serving as an altar boy?  Was that something  
4           that you had to do even though you were a day boy?

5           A.   Yes.  I started serving when I went to the village.  
6           I had been serving many, many years ago.  I'd gone to  
7           boarding school at the age of 7, I think it was, and  
8           I started altar serving then.  But when I went to  
9           Fort Augustus, I started serving on the altar under,  
10          I think, the parish priest, Father Aidan Duggan at the  
11          time.

12          Q.   Can we look at the physical set-up of the school.  We  
13          know there was a monastery and there was a school and  
14          the monastery essentially was out of bounds; is that  
15          right?

16          A.   That's correct, yes.

17          Q.   In relation to the dormitories, I understand fully that  
18          you weren't involved in the dormitories until you were  
19          in your final year, but were you able to access the  
20          dormitories when you were a day boy or not?

21          A.   Yes.  You could go up to the dormitories during the day.  
22          I can't remember if it was -- whether you were allowed  
23          to.  But day pupils would go up to the dormitories.  
24          There was no need for us to go up to the dormitories,  
25          but we could go up to the dormitories during the day,

1           yes.

2           Q.  When you were in your final year and you became  
3           a boarder, what was the sleeping arrangement at that  
4           time for you?

5           A.  The sixth year were given their own rooms in a separate  
6           wing called -- I think it was the east wing, so we all  
7           had our own rooms.  Even as a day pupil, when I started  
8           sixth year, I started as a day pupil, but I still had my  
9           own room.  So when I started boarding, that is where  
10          I slept because each room literally had a sink, a desk  
11          and a bed.  That was my room and I slept in that room.  
12          Occasionally when I was on duty I would sleep in the big  
13          dormitories because we had a rota of who slept in the  
14          dormitories.

15          Q.  Because, as you mentioned at the beginning, you had  
16          certain responsibilities in your final year and I think  
17          that was because you were a prefect.

18          A.  That's correct, yes.

19          Q.  How many prefects normally would there be?

20          A.  I think for each of the houses there was probably -- the  
21          senior houses, that is -- there were two or three house  
22          prefects and then there were school prefects of which  
23          there were probably four and I was one of the school  
24          prefects.

25          Q.  I'll come on to look at your responsibilities in

1 a moment. Before doing that, can I just understand then  
2 the set-up in relation to houses because you've just  
3 mentioned that. What was the arrangement there?

4 A. When I joined the school, there were three houses, there  
5 was Junior House, which was for the first two years.  
6 And then when you moved into your third year you went  
7 into one of the two senior houses, which was Lovat or  
8 Vaughan. I went into Lovat because [REDACTED] had been  
9 in Lovat and you generally followed where your peers had  
10 gone.

11 Then I know in the sixth year, the junior house was  
12 renamed Calder House when Carlekemp closed down.

13 Q. Yes. I think we've heard that in 1977, Carlekemp closed  
14 down and some of the children who had been there came to  
15 Fort Augustus.

16 A. That's correct.

17 Q. Did that mean that you had a broader age range at  
18 Fort Augustus in that some of the children might have  
19 been under 11?

20 A. I don't believe that's the case, no. I think they came  
21 in at 11.

22 Q. Let's look at the personnel and the staff. Can you tell  
23 me who the monks were during your period?

24 A. There were a number of monks who were related to the  
25 school. Father [REDACTED] MRQ was my housemaster,

1 Father [REDACTED] MMF [REDACTED] was the [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED].  
2 Father [REDACTED] MFG [REDACTED] was the Vaughan housemaster.  
3 Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] was the junior housemaster. There was  
4 Father [REDACTED] MKT [REDACTED], who was in the monastery, who would  
5 teach [REDACTED] I think it was. Father [REDACTED] MEZ [REDACTED] was the  
6 [REDACTED]. Father [REDACTED] MEW [REDACTED] was the  
7 [REDACTED] Then as monks came in, because they had novices  
8 come in, Father [REDACTED] MER [REDACTED], Father Stephen, Father Anthony.

9 Then you had lots of brothers, who obviously were a  
10 non-ordained part of the order.

11 Q. Looking to your housemaster, who you said was  
12 Father [REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED], how did you get on with him?

13 A. I got on very well with Father [REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED]. I had no  
14 issues with Father [REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED]. He was fair. We would  
15 called him [REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED]. Very occasionally he would lose his  
16 temper, "[REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED] would be having an eppie", we would say,  
17 an epileptic fit, it was a sort derogatory term for when  
18 he would go off on one. But he was generally fair and  
19 I got on well with Father [REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED].

20 Q. If you look at Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED], did you have much,  
21 much to do with him?

22 A. He was my housemaster and he also taught [REDACTED].

23 Q. You say he was your housemaster?

24 A. He was my housemaster when I joined the school for the  
25 first two years. He would teach [REDACTED] on

- 1 a one-to-one or with four or five boys around the table.
- 2 Q. How would you describe his personality?
- 3 A. I didn't -- at the time I didn't have anything odd about
- 4 him. He had long fingers, which was part of -- he was
- 5 [REDACTED], but I had nothing at the time.
- 6 I got on well with him. No issues whatsoever with
- 7 Father [REDACTED] MEV .
- 8 Q. And Father [REDACTED] MFG ?
- 9 A. Father [REDACTED] MFG , I got on very well with. Although
- 10 he was not my housemaster, he ran [REDACTED] and I did
- 11 well [REDACTED], so I got on very well with
- 12 Father [REDACTED] MFG and I corresponded with him when I left
- 13 the school.
- 14 Q. The [REDACTED] SNR then in your time was Father
- 15 [REDACTED] MMF ?
- 16 A. Father [REDACTED] MFF was [REDACTED] SNR when I joined the
- 17 school in 1971 and Father [REDACTED] MFF went off maybe a couple
- 18 of years later, I can't quite remember, and
- 19 Father [REDACTED] MMF then took over the [REDACTED] SNR .
- 20 Q. Let's look at Father [REDACTED] MFF first of all. Did you
- 21 have much to do with him?
- 22 A. Very little to do with Father [REDACTED] MFF . Very little at all.
- 23 Q. And Father [REDACTED] MMF ?
- 24 A. Again, being the [REDACTED] SNR , you didn't really have much
- 25 to do with them unless you were called in. I was

1           fortunate not to have been called in to see either of  
2           them.

3           Q. Did you have any sense of Father [REDACTED] MEV leaving  
4           Fort Augustus during your time there?

5           A. I can't remember Father [REDACTED] MEV leaving. What I do  
6           know is when Calder House came in, in other words  
7           Junior House was renamed Calder House after Carlekemp  
8           had closed, Father [REDACTED] MFC came in and he was  
9           the housemaster of Calder House. So I can't remember  
10          the exact circumstances around Father [REDACTED] MEV  
11          leaving.

12          Q. Do you have a recollection of him being there and then  
13          not being there?

14          A. No. I remember him being there, I remember him not  
15          being there, but I don't remember a sudden disappearance  
16          and questions as to why he had gone, no.

17          Q. And Father [REDACTED] MFC, who you have just  
18          mentioned, did you have much to do with him when he was  
19          there?

20          A. I probably had more to do with him in the sixth year  
21          because I was a prefect and I would go and see him if  
22          there were boys who were misbehaving. I do remember  
23          Father [REDACTED] MFC calling me in at one time and saying,  
24          "These boys from Carlekemp, you just need to be a little  
25          more soft on them", because the routine at Carlekemp was

1 possibly softer than it was at Fort Augustus.

2 Q. Let's just look for a moment or two at your role as  
3 a prefect. That's a role you took on in your final  
4 year. What were your duties. You were a school  
5 prefect, so can you just tell us what your duties were?

6 A. The school prefects and the house prefects had roughly  
7 the same responsibilities. They ran the discipline  
8 within the school to a certain extent. So it was the  
9 boys that would often get -- the prefects would get the  
10 boys up. It was the prefects that would make sure that  
11 they were ready, the prefects would monitor the queues  
12 going into the refectory for breakfast or dinner, tea,  
13 supper.

14 It was effectively the prefects that looked after  
15 the school and I do remember we had -- it would have  
16 been around that time, 1977/1978, when we had blackouts,  
17 it was the prefects that had to manage putting the boys  
18 in classrooms with candles because there was no power.  
19 Everything was done by the prefects, effectively. The  
20 prefects issued the discipline for most offences and  
21 they would send the boys to the housemaster for the more  
22 serious offences.

23 Q. Can I just look at that aspect of it then, discipline  
24 and punishment. What jurisdiction did the prefects have  
25 to punish children?



- 1       A. Prefects had the authority to punish the children, so  
2       I would have said the majority of discipline was  
3       undertaken by the prefects for people who would were  
4       being cheeky, they were talking during the prep, they  
5       were turning up late for things. The prefects would  
6       issue the discipline in those respects.
- 7       Q. What would that involve?
- 8       A. There were various disciplines. Leaf raking was one at  
9       a certain time of the year. That was soul-destroying  
10      because the leaves would just fall down again 10 minutes  
11      later. So 30 minutes' leaf raking. In the cricket  
12      season you would be sent to roller, go and push the  
13      roller round the cricket pitch, the wicket. You would  
14      give what were called 30 lines where you'd say to  
15      someone, "You've got 30 lines", on a subject that you  
16      made up and they would have to sit and write one side of  
17      A4.
- 18             You could issue a cold shower. They'd be sent down  
19      to stand in the shower, having a cold shower. Those  
20      were the sort of disciplines, the punishments that  
21      I remember prefects could issue.
- 22      Q. Then if you made a judgement to send a boy to the  
23      housemaster, what would inform that judgement?
- 24      A. The seriousness. If they'd been fighting, if they'd  
25      been stealing. If you felt it was a little bit more

1           serious, you would send them to the housemaster.

2       Q.   And would you yourself speak to the housemaster or would  
3           you leave it to the boy to tell the housemaster why  
4           he was being sent?

5       A.   I don't recall that.  I think there was probably an  
6           element of trust.  You would just send them to the  
7           housemaster, but I don't recall going to see the  
8           housemaster and saying, "I've sent these three boys to  
9           you".  I don't recall that.

10      LADY SMITH:  How old were you when you became a prefect?

11      A.   I would have been 17, my Lady.

12      LADY SMITH:  Were all the prefects about 17?

13      A.   They would all have been around that.  They would all  
14           have been in the sixth year, 17 or 18, yes.

15      LADY SMITH:  Thank you.

16      MR MacAULAY:  Do you have a recollection of sending boys to  
17           the housemaster on a regular basis?

18      A.   No.

19      Q.   Are you able to tell me how often in a term that  
20           would --

21      A.   I can't recall.  We would try and manage much of it  
22           ourselves rather than sending them to the housemaster.  
23           Maybe once a week you'd send someone to the housemaster.

24      Q.   Were there any other ways in which the housemaster would  
25           become involved in disciplining a child, other than the

1 child being sent by the prefects? For example, do you  
2 know if a teacher could send a child to a housemaster?

3 A. A teacher would send a child to the housemaster and,  
4 yes, they would go directly to the housemaster or send  
5 a child to the housemaster directly.

6 Q. What about the SNR? What role did he play in  
7 discipline?

8 A. The only time I recall a SNR being involved was  
9 with a child who had run away -- I think I was in my  
10 first or second year, first year I think. A child had  
11 run away and he was sent to the SNR and the  
12 SNR was obviously involved because it was quite  
13 serious.

14 LADY SMITH: When you say the SNR was involved,  
15 what was the SNR role?

16 A. To discipline --

17 LADY SMITH: Why?

18 A. -- the particular person. In this particular --  
19 I remember this incident: the child had run away back  
20 home, he was unhappy. When he was returned to the  
21 school, the SNR Father MFF gave him six of the  
22 cane for running away.

23 LADY SMITH: That was a child who was unhappy and had run  
24 back home because of that?

25 A. Correct, absolutely. Rather than addressing the

- 1           problem, they were providing the discipline.
- 2       MR MacAULAY:   What age was the child that you're talking  
3           about?
- 4       A.   He would have been, I'm guessing, 12.
- 5       Q.   Can I then go to the point when you were a young boy  
6           at the school, albeit as a day boy.  Again, was the  
7           discipline managed in the way you've described, namely  
8           in particular by prefects sending the children to the  
9           housemasters for punishment?
- 10      A.   Sorry, can you repeat that?
- 11      Q.   I'm now going back to the days when you were not  
12           a prefect.
- 13      A.   Right.
- 14      Q.   Was the system the same, that it would be the prefect  
15           who would send you, for example, to be disciplined by  
16           a housemaster?
- 17      A.   Yes, it was.
- 18      Q.   And did that happen to you?
- 19      A.   I just remember once being sent to Father MEV  
20           when I was in Junior House.  I don't recall in senior  
21           school being sent to the housemaster.
- 22      Q.   At all?
- 23      A.   At all.
- 24      Q.   But when you were sent to Father MEV, what  
25           happened?

1 A. I don't remember what it was for. I remember I was sent  
2 with a number of other pupils; we had done the same  
3 thing. I had recently broken my leg and the other boys  
4 were strapped for it by Father [REDACTED] MEV and I wasn't  
5 because I had a broken leg, I was told.

6 Q. You do tell us, I think it's in paragraph 23, about  
7 a process whereby if more than one person was being  
8 punished you would line up and go into the office one by  
9 one.

10 A. That's correct.

11 Q. Were you involved in that particular process?

12 A. In that particular incident, I was one of the boys that  
13 was lining up outside Father [REDACTED] MEV office, yes.

14 Q. Did you see on other occasions, although you may not  
15 have been involved in it, if this happened, that boys  
16 were lining up outside his room to be punished?

17 A. Yes, you would see that, yes.

18 Q. When you were punished by Father [REDACTED] MEV, let's just  
19 focus on that, what was the nature of the punishment?

20 A. I can't remember what I got instead of being strapped,  
21 to be honest.

22 Q. That's when you had the broken leg?

23 A. I had the broken leg, yes.

24 Q. Were there other occasions when you were punished by  
25 Father [REDACTED] MEV or not?

- 1 A. Not that I can recall, no.
- 2 Q. Do you have any recollection of ever receiving any form  
3 of corporal punishment when you were at the school?
- 4 A. No, I never received corporal punishment at the school.
- 5 Q. Were you aware that there were boys who were receiving  
6 corporal punishment?
- 7 A. Very much so.
- 8 Q. Was that spoken about?
- 9 A. Yes. Boys would often -- they wouldn't boast, but they  
10 would come and show you their hands if they had been  
11 strapped. You would see -- I remember the incident  
12 about the boy who was caned by the **SNR** You saw  
13 the bruised backside that he had as a result.
- 14 Q. Was that perhaps in a shower or was it in some other  
15 situation?
- 16 A. Because when you got changed for sport, you all got  
17 changed in one changing room, so you would see. That's  
18 the only one where I saw that there was bruising on  
19 someone's backside.
- 20 Q. Can you remember what the extent of the bruising was?
- 21 A. You could quite clearly see the lines. He'd had,  
22 I think, six of the cane and you could see the six lines  
23 across his backside.
- 24 Q. Do you know if he'd had the cane with his clothing on or  
25 his trousers off?

- 1 A. I don't know. I believe it was with his clothing on.
- 2 Q. Did you ever witness what one might describe as physical  
3 abuse at the school?
- 4 A. From?
- 5 Q. From teachers, from monks.
- 6 A. You would get ... In those days, a teacher would throw  
7 a duster at you, the hard dusters because there were  
8 chalkboards, the wooden-backed dusters, those would be  
9 thrown at you. You'd have -- occasionally a teacher  
10 might clip you with a book. But in that respect, that's  
11 probably the full sum of physical abuse. There was no  
12 striking from teachers in that respect or from the  
13 monks. They would be the same, they would throw board  
14 dusters at you, they would clip you round the back of  
15 the head with a book. That's all I can recall in terms  
16 of physical abuse.
- 17 Q. What about bullying?
- 18 A. Bullying happened at the school. From the pupils, you  
19 wouldn't -- I can't recall any incidents of bullying  
20 from staff, for example. But bullying was prevalent,  
21 especially in the earlier years, where the older boys  
22 would pick on younger boys and push them around and  
23 punch them.
- 24 Q. So it wasn't just name calling, there was physical  
25 bullying?

- 1 A. There was.
- 2 Q. Were you bullied?
- 3 A. I was bullied, yes.
- 4 Q. Although I think you had [REDACTED] at the school,  
5 you were still bullied?
- 6 A. Yes.
- 7 Q. How long did that last for?
- 8 A. I think -- because I do recall being bullied when I was  
9 outside of Junior House, so probably maybe third or  
10 fourth year it would have stopped. I would think third  
11 year, to be honest.
- 12 Q. How would you describe the extent of the bullying at the  
13 school? Would you describe it as a bullying culture or  
14 something less than that?
- 15 A. I would think bullying was common in the school, yes.
- 16 Q. And was that the position throughout your period at the  
17 school?
- 18 A. I think so. I don't recall bullying -- when I moved  
19 into the senior school, when I was in fourth, fifth,  
20 sixth year, you weren't so much aware of the bullying  
21 taking place because you were sort of separated from  
22 that. But it was certainly happening in the earlier  
23 years, yes.
- 24 Q. Did you have any sense at all that there may have been  
25 sexual abuse at the school?



1 A. I had no inkling of any sexual abuse taking place at the  
2 school.

3 Q. Did you have any sense of any inappropriate sexual  
4 behaviour amongst the boys themselves?

5 A. Between the boys, just on one occasion, but not really,  
6 no.

7 Q. I think you tell us in your statement that you saw the  
8 BBC documentary "Sins of Our Fathers" when it was  
9 published. What was your reaction to that?

10 A. Shock, I think. I had an inkling because of comments  
11 that had been made on a forum on the old boys' website.  
12 There was an inkling of things going on, but when the  
13 programme was aired I was shocked, totally shocked by  
14 what I'd heard.

15 Q. Was there an [REDACTED] during your time at the school  
16 by the name of MFH?

17 A. MFH, indeed. He was my [REDACTED] teacher.

18 Q. How was he regarded at the school?

19 A. He was an odd character. He lived on his own up in  
20 [REDACTED]. I think he only did  
21 [REDACTED] for the first two years, if I recall, so it would  
22 have been the younger pupils that did [REDACTED] under MFH.  
23 But there was nothing untoward, nothing untoward about  
24 MFH. He did a film, we would have been in the first  
25 or second year, and I do remember there was one

1 particular boy who was the star of this film, and it was  
2 sort of suggested afterwards, after I'd left school,  
3 that maybe there was something unusual about the  
4 affection, maybe, that MFH had towards this  
5 particular boy.

6 Q. But what was the film about?

7 A. I just remember this boy cycling along a particular  
8 path. It was a short film. I can't remember what it  
9 was about, to be honest.

10 Q. Okay. Was MFH at the school throughout your whole  
11 period at the school?

12 A. That I can't remember, because we only had MFH for  
13 the first two years. I can't remember if he was around  
14 in later years, to be honest.

15 Q. Did you have any knowledge whether or not MFH took  
16 a boy or boys from the school to his home?

17 A. No, no. I've heard about it, but no, I do not recall  
18 personally that happening.

19 Q. When you say you've heard about it --

20 A. I've read about it on forums.

21 Q. On the forums but not in connection with the inquiry?

22 A. No, on forums.

23 Q. You end your statement, Colin, by saying that you loved  
24 your time at Fort Augustus.

25 A. I do. I did, yes.

1 Q. So far as the schooling was concerned, did you consider  
2 that you received -- well, what do you consider the  
3 level of education that you received at the school to  
4 have been?

5 A. I thought it was good. I wasn't wonderfully academic,  
6 but I got the grades I needed to get an unconditional  
7 offer to university, so in that respect I felt it was  
8 okay. A lot of my classmates went to university, some  
9 of them have had successful careers, so the academic  
10 teaching couldn't have been that bad, I believe.

11 Q. I think you tell us in your statement that after you  
12 graduated, you yourself taught for a while.

13 A. I did. I spent four years teaching maths in two  
14 different boarding schools.

15 Q. Were you able to draw some sort of comparison between  
16 the environments in those schools and Fort Augustus?

17 A. I felt, looking at it from a teacher's perspective, that  
18 they were comparative in terms of both discipline and --  
19 yes. I think they were comparative with what went on in  
20 Fort Augustus.

21 Q. So far as Fort Augustus was concerned, from what you're  
22 saying, am I right in thinking that corporal punishment  
23 was still in place certainly up until the time you left  
24 the school in 1977?

25 A. It was, yes.

1 MR MacAULAY: Very well, Colin. Thank you very much indeed  
2 for coming to give your evidence to the inquiry. These  
3 are all the questions I have for you.

4 My Lady, as far as I'm aware, no questions have been  
5 submitted for Colin.

6 LADY SMITH: Colin, can I just check one thing? You say in  
7 your statement that [REDACTED] was a [REDACTED]  
8 at the school. Was he a [REDACTED] at the school all the  
9 time you were a pupil there?

10 A. When I went into the sixth year, in 1977, he left at  
11 that point.

12 LADY SMITH: Right. But he'd been employed at the school  
13 right up to then?

14 A. Correct.

15 LADY SMITH: And [REDACTED] was the school [REDACTED]  
16 is that right?

17 A. She was. When [REDACTED] to the village, the school had  
18 a [REDACTED] who was involved in a car accident shortly  
19 after I arrived, which meant she had to retire, [REDACTED]  
20 [REDACTED] was the [REDACTED] until the school closed.

21 LADY SMITH: Thank you. That's very helpful. Are there any  
22 outstanding applications for questions? No.

23 Colin, that does complete the questions we have for  
24 you. Thank you so much for engaging with the inquiry,  
25 both by providing a written statement to us, which has

1           been very helpful, and for coming along today to talk to  
2           us directly about your time at Fort Augustus. It  
3           certainly assists me with the picture that I'm building  
4           about the school and I'm grateful for it. I'm now able  
5           to let you go with my thanks.

6           A. Thank you, my Lady.

7                                 (The witness withdrew)

8           LADY SMITH: Yes.

9           MR MacAULAY: My Lady, we do have time, at least, certainly  
10           for one read-in this morning.

11          LADY SMITH: Let's try that.

12                         Ms MacLeod, when you're ready, let's go on to the  
13           read-ins that we can do today.

14                                 Witness statement of "VERA" (read)

15          MS MACLEOD: I will read the statement of "Vera", which is  
16           a pseudonym for this witness.

17                         Vera's statement is at WIT.001.002.4509. Vera did  
18           not wish to give oral evidence herself; she preferred  
19           for her evidence to be read in in this way:

20                         "My name is Vera. I was born in 1939. I am  
21           providing a statement in relation to my nephew's  
22           experiences at Fort Augustus Abbey. Many of my  
23           recollections are based on information given to me by my  
24           nephew and his family.

25                         "I am a nursing sister in an order dedicated to the

1 care of the sick and dying. I was a nursing sister up  
2 until 12 years ago. I retired from nursing when I was  
3 61 and went into administration as a provincial superior  
4 over the sisters in the UK. In the last six years,  
5 I was on the congregational leadership team. I was the  
6 assistant congregational leader.

7 "In the late 1970s, my sister and her husband were  
8 working in Brussels. Her husband was with the Scottish  
9 Commission for Agriculture and Fisheries. He was  
10 travelling a lot at that time. Their son, my nephew  
11 Peter, was at school in Brussels but wasn't coping very  
12 well. He was at the European school, which was huge.  
13 He then went to the French school to try and him help.  
14 He didn't manage well there either. After a lot of  
15 discussion with Peter, my sister and her husband decided  
16 that he would go to boarding school at Fort Augustus to  
17 give him a better chance.

18 "I think my sister and brother-in-law decided on  
19 Fort Augustus because it was in Scotland and it was  
20 a Catholic school. They had been to visit, but I don't  
21 think they'd seen the dormitories. I don't think they  
22 would have sent Peter there if they'd seen the  
23 dormitories. They were like an army boot camp.

24 "It was a big thing for Peter and his family. He  
25 has three sisters. There is about a year between each

1 of them. One of his sisters wasn't coping with the  
2 European school at the same time. She went on to  
3 a school in Perthshire. The parents were still in  
4 Brussels; the father couldn't just up sticks and come  
5 home.

6 "At that stage I was living and working in  
7 Edinburgh. I was the contact person for the children at  
8 half-term. My sister always tried to come back to  
9 Edinburgh for the summer holidays. She and her husband  
10 kept a house in Edinburgh so that the children would  
11 have it for the holidays.

12 "I left in 1986. I don't have specific dates for  
13 when Peter was at Fort Augustus.

14 "Peter started at Fort Augustus when he was about  
15 13. He was there for about four years. Father **MMF**  
16 was the **SNR** the whole time Peter was there.  
17 I think there must have been around 400 pupils in the  
18 school. There was a lot of secular staff in teaching  
19 roles. I went there for the first time when Peter was  
20 15. He showed me around the school. That was the only  
21 time I went to the school.

22 "Peter used to grumble about getting up early.  
23 I suppose they had to go to Mass before school. The  
24 dormitory was just horrific. I saw them myself when  
25 Peter showed me around. He came from a fairly

1 comfortable family, although I wouldn't say they were  
2 well off. Being the only boy, he always had his own  
3 bedroom. He had everything. I remember commenting to  
4 my sister that she was paying money for those  
5 dormitories.

6 "The dormitories were terrible. They were so basic.  
7 There was nothing. Just an iron bedstead and a little  
8 locker. There wasn't even a chair. There were at least  
9 20 beds in the dormitories. It was a long room just  
10 like a corridor. The bed sheets looked horrible. They  
11 were just little cotton blankets and it was a cold  
12 place, Fort Augustus.

13 "I remember asking my nephew how he felt after all  
14 the abuse came up a few years after he left the school.  
15 He said he used to cry himself to sleep at night under  
16 the covers. I can understand why he did that, having  
17 left home with three sisters who just thought he was  
18 wonderful. They thought the world of him.

19 "I entered religious life when it was very strict,  
20 but we didn't have anything like that. We had nice  
21 accommodation.

22 "To this day Peter won't eat anything unless my  
23 sister has prepared it. That's how it affected him.  
24 Recently he told me that other boys used to put things  
25 into his soup and his meals.



1           "The showers were all communal. There was no  
2 privacy. I saw them when I visited the school. For  
3 a public school, it was just horrendous. I don't know  
4 whether parents didn't see it. I think the whole lack  
5 of privacy must have been very hard. The showers were  
6 terrible.

7           "Peter didn't really describe how a day at  
8 Fort Augustus might pass. He never spoke much about the  
9 academic side of things. He didn't do well  
10 academically. I would have expected him to do well  
11 given the start he had at primary school.

12           "He was very good at art and they encouraged his  
13 art. From Fort Augustus he went on to the art college  
14 at Edinburgh.

15           "Peter was into sports. He was in one of cadets,  
16 I think it was the Air Force. They did a lot of things  
17 on the lake. Loch Ness was nearby. They did a lot of  
18 water sports. Outdoor activities and sport were very  
19 much encouraged. They played rugby mostly.

20           "I think religion was a big part of the daily  
21 routine. They had Mass every morning. I think Peter  
22 was an altar boy in Scotland before the family moved to  
23 Brussels and he served on the altar for  
24 Father MEV.

25           I met the matron when I visited the school but

1 I think she is dead now. I don't remember her name.

2 I think her role was the physical health of the boys,  
3 making sure they were healthy. If a boy was ill or  
4 injured, he would go to her.

5 "The cane was used a lot. After he left the school,  
6 Peter told me about a boy whose hands were bleeding  
7 after getting the cane. I asked whether he went to the  
8 matron and Peter said that he did, but she just bandaged  
9 his hands and nothing further was done. Peter also told  
10 me that another boy ended up in hospital with injuries  
11 from the abuse from the cane. Peter didn't know whether  
12 the boys' parents were informed. He thought it was all  
13 covered up.

14 "There was no problem with me going to visit. Peter  
15 showed me around everywhere. I was with him on my own.  
16 He took me down to the lake. At that stage, he seemed  
17 quite happy. I didn't pick up on anything. That must  
18 have been within months of Peter having reported the  
19 abuse to his sisters, which he did when he was 15.

20 "I don't know whether there were inspections of the  
21 school, but Peter used to tell us that bishops used to  
22 visit a lot. He named Bishop Conti, for example.

23 "Last year Peter told me about the bullying that  
24 went on amongst the boys. The masters must have known.  
25 That was awful. It involved putting things in food,

1 stealing from other boys. They would cough things up  
2 and put them in food. They would put urine in the food.  
3 It was all kinds of things. I suppose it was considered  
4 as pranks in those days. It was terrible.

5 "A long time after he left the school, I realised  
6 that it hadn't been a happy time for Peter. He didn't  
7 speak to me about it at the time. I can't understand  
8 how the matron there didn't pick up on a lot of these  
9 issues. Some of it was very violent and students had  
10 injuries. That should have been put up as a red flag to  
11 whoever was in charge. There was terrible behaviour.  
12 Parents were paying thousands of pounds to get the best  
13 education and it was disastrous really.

14 "Last year, Peter spoke about physical abuse by the  
15 cane on the hands, bottom and back. There was a boy who  
16 ended up in hospital with injuries to his back. Maybe  
17 the parents weren't informed but all these records  
18 should have been kept. I don't know where the records  
19 went from Fort Augustus but they must be somewhere.

20 "Father **MEV** was Peter's housemaster. At that  
21 time priests weren't allowed to concelebrate Mass  
22 together, they had to do it on their own. A few years  
23 ago, Peter told me that Father **MEV** asked him to  
24 serve on the altar every morning. Afterwards they used  
25 to have breakfast together and that's when the abuse

1 started. Peter was a very attractive young man, so  
2 I can see how it happened.

3 "I don't know what time of day Father **MEV**  
4 tended to abuse Peter. He seemed to have breakfast with  
5 him after they celebrated Mass and I got the feeling  
6 from him it happened then, but I never asked him for  
7 more details.

8 "Peter didn't name anybody else who had been abused  
9 by Father **MEV**. He knew other boys who had  
10 injuries from physical abuse. He told me he knew other  
11 boys that were sexually abused as well. I think he  
12 became aware of them when the television documentary was  
13 made. There were two brothers attending the school who  
14 he seemed to be close to.

15 "Peter had been at Fort Augustus for a few years  
16 before he mentioned the abuse to anybody. He was 15  
17 when he told his sisters who were attending another  
18 school in Scotland. They were horrified about what was  
19 happening. They told their mother. The parents came  
20 home. Obviously they were all very distressed. My  
21 sister told me this when she got back to Scotland. She  
22 said that there had been an incident at Fort Augustus.

23 "When my sister came home to investigate it, she  
24 said they needed **[REDACTED]**

25 **[REDACTED]** It needed to be somebody he was okay

1 with. My parents were still alive and they had a very  
2 good GP, who I knew as a friend. My sister spoke to her  
3 and she agreed to see Peter if he wanted it. Peter knew  
4 her from visiting my parents. She was based in  
5 South Edinburgh. [REDACTED]

6 [REDACTED]  
7 [REDACTED]. The  
8 medical practice has since closed down.

9 "When the documentary was made, I think the  
10 producers tried to obtain Peter's [REDACTED] but  
11 without success. I didn't speak to Peter about the  
12 abuse at the time; it came to my attention when my  
13 sister asked me to travel up to Fort Augustus with them.  
14 She told me the reason why they were going. I was very  
15 shocked. She didn't go into detail. I think she just  
16 told me that he had been physically and sexually abused  
17 by Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED]. I went with my sister,  
18 brother-in-law and Peter. They had made an appointment  
19 to see [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED], Father [REDACTED] MMF [REDACTED].

20 They went up to Fort Augustus to meet the  
21 [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED]. They asked me to go with them so I could  
22 have time with Peter while they were there with the  
23 [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED]. I had never been there before. Peter  
24 showed me around the whole school and dormitories while  
25 his parents were in the meeting. I was horrified by the

1 dormitories. They were terrible. They were like  
2 a prison camp.

3 "I think they discussed what had happened to Peter  
4 with Father [REDACTED] MMF, but I wasn't present. They were  
5 obviously very upset about it, especially his dad. His  
6 dad took it worse. We must have gone up during the  
7 summer holidays because there were no other students  
8 around. It was a matter of weeks after he had told his  
9 sisters about the abuse. His parents had to come over  
10 from Brussels.

11 "[REDACTED] SNR was Father [REDACTED] MMF, who I gather  
12 has died since. He denied ever meeting us. I was there  
13 as a witness and I can still see him saying goodbye to  
14 us and that it would never happen again. When he was  
15 interviewed on the television years later, he completely  
16 denied that he had ever met us. That upsets me too, the  
17 denial. I didn't speak to Father [REDACTED] MMF myself. The  
18 only time I saw him was when we were leaving and he came  
19 to see us off. At that time I was still wearing  
20 a religious habit. I didn't meet any other monks or  
21 staff members.

22 "Peter's abuser was Father [REDACTED] MEV. At the  
23 interview with Father [REDACTED] MMF, his parents were told  
24 that he was being moved to Australia and he would have  
25 no more contact with the school. My sister told me that

1 at the time. There was no further follow-ups with the  
2 parents and no external agencies were involved. Peter  
3 only had a year remaining so he went back and finished  
4 his time there after the summer holidays. I was  
5 surprised he was going back, but my sister said they'd  
6 assured him that Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] wasn't there any  
7 longer. Father [REDACTED] MMF [REDACTED] must have told them that. My  
8 sister told me that he had been moved to Australia.

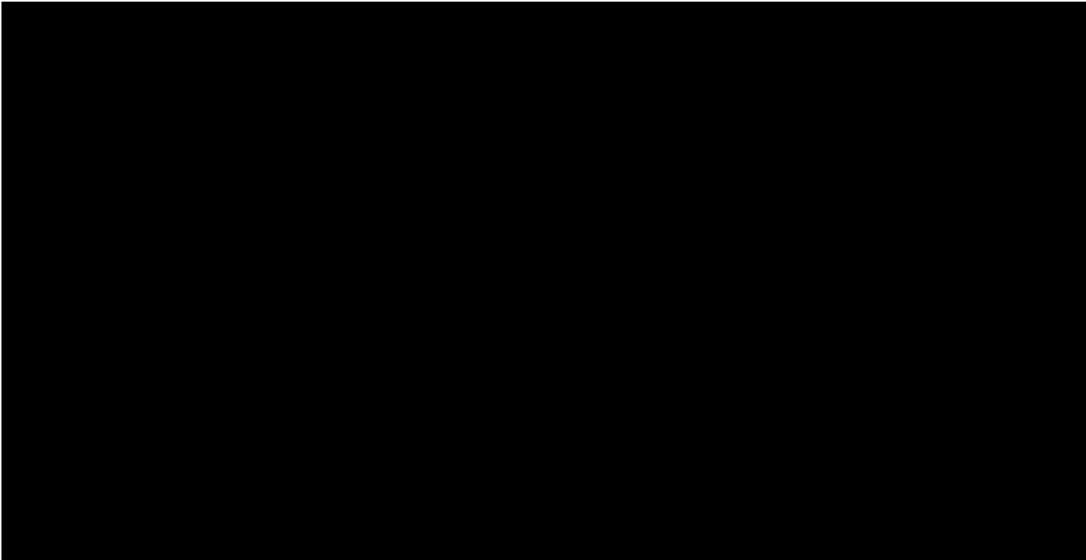
9 "I wasn't happy about Peter going back for his final  
10 year. The dormitories had really upset me. My sister  
11 said they didn't have much option and he only had a year  
12 to go. Peter seemed okay about going back. I think  
13 he was reassured that Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] was gone. It  
14 hadn't happened with any of the other monks.

15 "When he showed me around whilst his parents were  
16 with Father [REDACTED] MMF [REDACTED], he seemed happy enough. During  
17 that time, he didn't speak to me about the abuse.  
18 I didn't know much about what had happened at the time.  
19 My sister had just told me it was an incident.  
20 I suppose I was a bit naive at the time. I have learned  
21 a lot over the years working with people. It's just  
22 horrible. Every time you open the newspapers, it's  
23 there. I have stopped buying the Catholic newspapers  
24 because every time you open them there's something else  
25 about abuse.

1           "There was no discussion about reporting it to the  
2 police when Peter was still at school. My sister did  
3 speak to the bishop at that time, [REDACTED] LRM He was  
4 a bishop at the time then he went on to become  
5 a cardinal. Cardinal O'Brien and Archbishop Conti were  
6 very involved in Fort Augustus. They must have known  
7 what was going on.

8           "Not long after Peter disclosed the abuse, my sister  
9 requested a meeting with [REDACTED] LRM at his residence  
10 in Edinburgh. She spoke to him. She said that from the  
11 way she spoke to him, he knew what was going on at  
12 Fort Augustus. We've no proof of that. Peter told me  
13 the bishops did used to visit a lot. I don't think they  
14 could have gone into the school and not known. They  
15 were visiting so regularly and in recent years Peter  
16 told me that the abuse was so rife. Peter also told me  
17 that he wasn't the only boy being sexually abused.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

" [REDACTED] MEV came quite quickly after the abuse was disclosed. Peter had left the school by then, but I think it was within a year.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] MEV

[REDACTED] That

irritated him more than anything. Peter turned away from the church, as has his father.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

"Peter went back to school for one last year after the abuse was reported. He must have left when he was about 17. He didn't stay on for his sixth year. I think he did his Highers. He studied at the art college in Edinburgh for two years. He is a painter

1 now. Art is the thing that's keeping him going. He  
2 does oil and watercolours. He has had a [REDACTED]  
3 in Edinburgh. His parents are funding it all because  
4 money-wise he is hopeless.

5 "Peter went on to art college in Edinburgh straight  
6 after he left school. He didn't finish his course.  
7 I don't know why he left. He started to do a few  
8 strange things. He started gambling. He was diagnosed  
9 as being a schizophrenic. His diagnosis took quite  
10 a while.

11 "My sister maintains that the schizophrenia and the  
12 gambling are because of what happened to him at  
13 Fort Augustus. I wouldn't know. I think you need a lot  
14 of proof for that medically. It could be. It very  
15 often happens to youngsters in their second and third  
16 year of university.

17 "My nephew had quite a difficult time since leaving  
18 Fort Augustus. He's had the odd relationship but  
19 they've never lasted. Because of the bullying at  
20 Fort Augustus and boys putting things in his food, Peter  
21 still won't eat anything unless my sister prepares it.  
22 He has a flat in Edinburgh but he spends most of his  
23 time with his parents. It is not easy for them,  
24 especially as they are getting on in years. My sister  
25 does his washing and one of his sisters does his

1 ironing. She knows what he went through though; he  
2 talks to his sisters.

3 "We're a close-knit family. I sent them the  
4 brochure for a new house I've put an offer in for and  
5 Peter rang me recently telling me I should go ahead.

6 "I think the abuse at Fort Augustus has a lot to do  
7 with where my nephew's life is now. I think it ruined  
8 his life, particularly the fact he was never able to  
9 hold down a relationship. To my knowledge, he has never  
10 been in employment. He knows he has to take his tablets  
11 every day otherwise he'll slip back. He is lucky that  
12 he has his parents supporting him. I think he's found  
13 it difficult to grow up and I think what happened in  
14 Fort Augustus has a lot to do with that. He was let  
15 down by people high up in the church who he respected.

16 "There's a ripple effect and it's had an impact on  
17 the whole family. When Peter left for boarding school,  
18 his father told him to look on his houseparent as his  
19 father and that the houseparent had taken his place and  
20 would look after him. I think that's what hurts his  
21 parents the most. That's the thing that to this day my  
22 brother-in-law still feels guilty about. He's turned  
23 away from the church completely as a result and I don't  
24 blame him. It was a terrible thing to happen.

25 "Supporting Peter hasn't been easy for my sister and

1 her husband. He has a nice flat now, but he is up every  
2 day at my sister's for his lunch and his supper and to  
3 get his washing down. It's a horrible situation,  
4 I don't know if they'll ever get justice for it. [REDACTED]

5 [REDACTED]  
6 MEV, [REDACTED]  
7 [REDACTED]

8 "Being a religious sister myself I know a lot about  
9 religious orders. The Benedictines were held very  
10 highly in our regard. When I was living in London,  
11 I lived very near St Benedict's School. I had a lot of  
12 contact with the Benedictines there. I had no reason to  
13 think badly of them, but then a lot happened at  
14 St Benedict's involving people we held in great esteem.  
15 In a lot of ways, it has shaken my faith.

16 "A couple of the Benedictine priests at Ealing were  
17 held up to us as examples of wonderful religious. It is  
18 sometimes very hard to hold on to the faith and believe  
19 that there are good people out there.

20 "I find it so hard because there has been so much  
21 cover-up in the Catholic Church. I don't know how I'm  
22 still here in the church. It tests my faith a lot but  
23 I have very good friends who help me. There are only  
24 a couple of sisters in the order who I've shared my  
25 nephew's experiences with. I just felt it was so

1 personal that I didn't feel able to share it with  
2 anybody else.

3 "I think I have managed to keep my faith because of  
4 my prayer life. The prayer life of a religious is very  
5 personal. I don't think you could go along with that,  
6 hiding any deceit. I think that's kept me going. I've  
7 had very bad days, particularly when I was ill.

8 "Even though I'm semi-retired I'm still bound by the  
9 rules of my order. We take vows, so do the  
10 Benedictines. That's what's so upsetting. You profess  
11 those vows in front of a congregation. It's not  
12 something private; that's your rules of life, really.

13 "The BBC made a programme about abuse at  
14 Fort Augustus called 'Sins of Our Fathers'. I don't  
15 know how the BBC journalist got my sister and  
16 brother-in-law's details, but he contacted them.

17 **MEV** was on the BBC film. He shut the door  
18 on the reporter in Australia.

19 "As a consequence of the BBC's involvement, the  
20 police became involved. My sister and her husband both  
21 agreed to be interviewed by the police. I was surprised  
22 her husband agreed to be interviewed. It was a video  
23 interview. Peter did an interview too.

24 "I was contacted by the police in Tooting Bec,  
25 London. I lived there from 2011 to 2016, so it would

1 have been after 2011. The police came to see me first  
2 and then I had to go down to Tooting Bec police station  
3 and make a statement. I didn't get a copy of that  
4 unfortunately. I made my statement to an uniformed  
5 officer about what I knew about Peter's time at  
6 Fort Augustus.

7 "I don't know what happened to the investigation  
8 after that. It all seemed to die down. I can't  
9 understand why it just quietened down. It didn't go  
10 anywhere after that.

11 "My nephew's abuser is in Australia now. They're  
12 trying to extradite him. [REDACTED]

13 [REDACTED]

14 [REDACTED]

15 [REDACTED]

16 [REDACTED]

17 [REDACTED]

18 [REDACTED]

19 [REDACTED] I am not sure how it works.

20 "I am still in contact with the BBC journalist,  
21 Murdoch Rodgers, although he is not with the BBC any  
22 more. He has been a tremendous support to me. He has  
23 also been a great support to Peter. The programme had  
24 a big impact on him.

25 "Peter's sister [REDACTED] MLW started to get me involved in

1 his case. I think we got talking about it because there  
2 was so much about abuse in the media. She spoke to me  
3 about Peter. I said I knew a little bit about it but  
4 I didn't know much. She started writing to people  
5 before I started writing to them.

6 **MLW** did a lot of digging before I came on the  
7 scene. She wrote to Cardinal Pell and  
8 Archbishop Keith O'Brien, as he was then. She wrote to  
9 Bishop Conti. She knows more than I do because she was  
10 the one that Peter told the most. I spoke to her about  
11 it and she said I'd no idea what happened to him.  
12 I don't know the half of it.

13 "There were a lot of things covered up that could  
14 have been dealt with at the time. I suppose a lot of  
15 things were covered up to keep the name of the school.  
16 It was quite a well-known public school. If parents  
17 knew what was going on, they wouldn't send their boys  
18 there.

19 "It really upsets me that Father **MMF** denied we  
20 went to Fort Augustus for the meeting. I'm sorry that  
21 he is dead. I know a little bit about canon law.  
22 Anybody in his position has to keep his diaries for six  
23 years. I have been in that position myself. He said he  
24 had no record of the visit but he must have had a record  
25 in his diary. It really upsets me that somebody of his

1 standing in the church, with his education, would deny  
2 it. If we had any kind of leadership(?) in our order,  
3 we are supposed to keep our diaries. That was very  
4 hard.

5 "We were given to believe that Father **MEV** was  
6 dismissed from the Benedictine Order when he was moved  
7 to Australia. My brother-in-law's mother was in  
8 Australia for a visit. I think it was in the early  
9 1980s. She didn't know anything about the abuse of  
10 Peter and my sister and her husband never enlightened  
11 her. She came back and said he had met the priest who  
12 taught Peter at Fort Augustus. It was extraordinary, of  
13 all of people in Sydney for her to meet. He was in  
14 a parish in Australia working as a priest. My  
15 brother-in-law nearly went berserk.

16 "In 2013 I was out in Australia on visitation of my  
17 order. I made an appointment to meet with Bishop  
18 Peter Comensoli, who was the administrator of the  
19 Diocese of Sydney. I knew him because he lived in  
20 Edinburgh for a year when he was studying for a degree.  
21 I had met him several times in Edinburgh so he knew me.

22 "I asked him if he was aware of what had happened to  
23 Peter and he said he was and that my sister had told him  
24 about it. I told him that the priest responsible was  
25 actually working in his diocese. He nearly fell off his



1 chair. He had no idea. He was horrified. I can still  
2 see the shock on his face when I told him. That evening  
3 Father [REDACTED] MEV was taken out of the parish.

4 "When I was in Australia and realised  
5 Father [REDACTED] MEV was still working in a parish  
6 I couldn't believe it. That was when I really started  
7 to get involved in writing letters. I told  
8 Bishop Comensoli that 'Sins of Our Fathers' was coming  
9 out. He didn't know about it. It was shown in  
10 Australia.

11 "Seemingly, there was another Benedictine from  
12 Fort Augustus working out there as well and they didn't  
13 know. I can't understand how they didn't know.  
14 Cardinal Pell was away at the time in Buenos Aires. He  
15 couldn't be contacted. Cardinal Pell knew about  
16 Father [REDACTED] MEV. When a priest is moved, even from  
17 within the diocese, he has to present his credentials  
18 before he is allowed to say Mass. It's a little resumé  
19 of his background and who he is. It is written  
20 credentials. [REDACTED] MLW had also written to Cardinal Pell  
21 about Peter. That's another way that it was covered up.  
22 He shouldn't have allowed him to work as a priest,  
23 especially in a parish where you have altar boys and  
24 young people.

25 "Bishop Comensoli was a huge support to us because

1 he got things moving.

2 "Father **MMF** is dead now. I traced him to  
3 Oxford University where he was teaching young students.  
4 I wrote to them and complained that he shouldn't have  
5 been with young men. That was wrong because the policy  
6 of the church was that anybody who had been involved in  
7 abuse was not allowed to work with children or young  
8 adults. He was removed from there.

9 "I wrote to the person who I was told was the head  
10 of the Benedictines in the UK, Abbot Cuthbert Madden of  
11 Ampleforth. I also wrote to Dom Richard Yeo, who came  
12 to see me in London. I didn't get anywhere with him.  
13 He denied everything too. He was supposed to be the  
14 representative for the UK on a child safeguarding  
15 commission for the Catholic Church in England and Wales,  
16 which I thought was ridiculous. I find it very  
17 difficult now. I find it very difficult because I've  
18 met him a few sometimes since at religious meetings and  
19 I just steer away from him.

20 "I also wrote to a Mrs Booth, who was the advisory  
21 protection for children and vulnerable adults for the  
22 local authority in Aberdeen. She confirmed in a letter  
23 to **MLW** that she knew what was going on at  
24 Fort Augustus. I also wrote to Helen Darroch. She was  
25 a sister based in Glasgow, who was supposed to be

1 supporting victims and families of victims who had  
2 suffered abuse in the church. She helped me a bit  
3 at the time because I was terribly upset about it all.  
4 All of this was around the same time as the BBC getting  
5 in touch.

6 "Following all the correspondence, my overall  
7 experience was of complete denial from every angle. It  
8 wasn't just from the Benedictines, but from the church  
9 as a whole. We were quite friendly with  
10 Cardinal O'Brien. He knew Peter's situation and yet he  
11 never really let on that he was aware of what had gone  
12 on at Fort Augustus. The abuse had already started to  
13 surface then and he never mentioned it. I think had  
14 Peter and his family got an official letter of apology  
15 from the church or from the Benedictines, it might have  
16 helped. There has been no apology and no support  
17 offered to them at all.

18 "After the TV programme the Catholic Church in  
19 Edinburgh held meetings in different parishes for people  
20 whose relatives had been abused. My sister went to one  
21 such meeting. She said it was just horrible and they  
22 weren't addressing the issue at all. They were just  
23 making excuses for the abuser. She walked out. It was  
24 insulting.

25 "I contacted the inquiry because I still feel that

1 the abuse has been covered up all the time. The  
2 Benedictines certainly haven't taken any responsibility  
3 at all. Peter is only one of the boys who were abused.  
4 There must have been quite a few others, so why haven't  
5 they come out and said that they apologise or done  
6 something?

7 "My hope is that the church will acknowledge what  
8 went on was abuse and perhaps that they knew about it.  
9 The Benedictines were certainly aware of it. I suppose  
10 it's a bit late now to offer support to these people,  
11 but there must be others worse off than Peter who don't  
12 have support.

13 "I think those in authority need to be more  
14 vigilant. From my own experience, I have been around my  
15 congregation. I have visited our sisters and listened  
16 to them. It's up to those in authority. They need to  
17 be vigilant. You can see signs when people are being  
18 intimidated. It's the ones in authority who have the  
19 power to do something.

20 "When I was provincial of my order, I had to attend  
21 meetings about safeguarding. We're trustees so we have  
22 to be aware of these things and attend updates. We were  
23 very well trained in abuse.

24 "We have a home for our elderly sisters. When I was  
25 in the provincial leadership I knew one of the sisters

1 was being bullied but she wouldn't admit it. In the  
2 end, I took her out of that situation and she stayed  
3 with me for a year. Eventually I got help for her.  
4 There is a very good counselling in Manchester. She was  
5 able to acknowledge it and we were able to stop it.  
6 Because I was prepared to do something about it, I was  
7 able to confront the other person about what she was  
8 doing. Bullying can destroy people.

9 "I think the church needs to ensure there is more  
10 training and those in authority need to be more  
11 vigilant. That's where it lies. Those in authority  
12 need to be prepared to stand up.

13 "My sister and her family had no contact from the  
14 headmaster after Peter was abused. All they got was the  
15 bill from the bursar.

16 "I have no objection to my witness statement being  
17 published as part of the evidence to the inquiry.  
18 I believe the facts stated in my witness statement are  
19 true."

20 The statement was signed by Vera on 13 March 2019.

21 LADY SMITH: Thank you very much, Ms MacLeod.

22 Where are we now?

23 MS MACLEOD: I do have another read-in I could do.

24 I couldn't quite guarantee that it would be finished by  
25 1. It's quite a lengthy statement.

1 LADY SMITH: And do we have space to fit it in next wee,k,  
2 do you think?

3 MS MACLEOD: Yes, we do, my Lady.

4 LADY SMITH: Let's leave that one until next week and just  
5 rise early today. Some people might be glad if we do  
6 that given that this is a holiday weekend and that will  
7 enable them to get finished up in time.

8 Very well. We'll pause now until Tuesday,  
9 10 o'clock, as usual. Is that right?

10 MS MACLEOD: Yes, my Lady.

11 (12.15 pm)

12 (The inquiry adjourned until 10.00 am  
13 on Tuesday, 17 September 2019)

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GEORGE CAMPBELL (sworn) .....1

    Questions from Ms MacLEOD .....1

COLIN BRYCE (sworn) .....29

    Questions from MR MacAULAY .....29

Witness statement of "VERA" (read) .....53

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