

## **Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Supplementary Witness Statement of

### **Murdoch RODGERS**

Support person present: No

1. My name is Murdoch Rodgers. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1950. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. In the course of producing the film 'Sins of Our Father', and subsequently, I obtained accounts from former pupils of Carlekemp Preparatory School and Fort Augustus Abbey School. The accounts were obtained independently of each other and were given in confidence. I have previously provided a statement to the Inquiry, which I signed on 22 February 2019. My former colleague, Mark Daly, has also provided a statement to the Inquiry.
3. I am providing a supplementary statement concerning Mr A, a former teacher at Carlekemp Preparatory School, because I believe that he has important information about allegations of sexual abuse that should be made known to the Inquiry and to the Police. I have offered to help in this regard after he had indicated a willingness to support those who had experienced abuse. As far as I know, he has not done so.
4. I have not given the Inquiry the names of all the former pupils who have spoken to me about this teacher. I am hoping that they will speak to the Inquiry themselves.

### **Background**

5. In the immediate aftermath of the transmission of the film in July 2013, a number of former pupils contacted the BBC to talk about their experiences of abuse at the school.

We had about thirty or forty calls within a short period of time, the majority of which were about Carlekemp. According to these accounts, which covered the period from the late 1950s until the school closed in 1977, sexual abuse and physical beatings were commonplace. From what I have heard, it was an unusual set of circumstances if a boy wasn't abused in some way at Carlekemp. I have provided information on this in my previous statement.

6. In the course of these early discussions with the former pupils, the alleged abusers were identified as Father [REDACTED] MFD [REDACTED], Father [REDACTED] MFA [REDACTED] Father [REDACTED] MEY [REDACTED] and Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED]

### Research

7. Mark Daly and I were given a batch of old Corbies, the school magazine, The Corbie, by a former pupil. The Corbie was published twice a year, maybe once a year sometimes. They usually contain a little introduction that says something about what has been going on within the community. They also have the names of societies that were operating and the results of sporting events such as cricket and rugby matches, and some have photographs and names of the team players underneath. They also have lists of the names of the boys who started at Carlekemp in the autumn and the names of those who left. In the section that dealt with the boys who were starting and leaving Fort Augustus, the headings are in Latin. Under the heading 'Salvete', there is a list of the boys who had started at the school, and under 'Valet' there is a list of those who had left.
8. There were a couple of stories from the boys about Mr A being quite violent, but I don't think there was anything unusual in that because the accounts I had been given previously described most of the staff as being violent. But one man in particular was very vocal about beatings that Mr A had dished out. My first contact with this man was back in 2017. He told me that the only word he would use to describe Mr A was "sadist". He said that Mr A was a man who enjoyed the power of the belt and the authority that he had over the boys, and said that if he were to meet him now he would confront him

with the reality of the misery and turmoil that he had inflicted just to see if there might be an inkling of remorse. It still made him really angry. He also described how Mr A had a group of older boys, prefects, that would be invited to his study and that they would "lord it" over the rest of the younger boys. He gave me the names of some of those boys.

9. I then went back to some former pupils, whom I had identified as being pupils at Carlekemp at the same time as this former pupil, and asked them if they could remember anything about Mr A, without making any reference to physical abuse. More stories then began to emerge about Mr A.
  
10. Another man got in touch with me and spoke about Mr A. I had spoken to this man on a number of occasions before, and he had talked a bit about Mr A and some other boys who were at the school, but he hadn't really said anything about his own experience. Then, during the course of another conversation, which was in response to me sending out information to the former pupils I keep in touch with, which I do routinely, the discussion turned to Mr A. He described being terrified for most of his time at the school. He talked of Mr A and his association with a "select" group of older boys and referred to a specific incident that he said had stayed with him most of his adult life. This incident occurred in an area known as the "Piggeries", which was an area at the back of Carlekemp, a short distance from the school. It was a quiet place, tucked away out of sight where the boys would sometimes go. The incident involved these older boys and Mr A. The man cannot recall what happened to him, but he knows that it wasn't right. He made reference to the fact that there was a bed in this area. When he walked in there, these older boys were there and Mr A was at the back watching whatever it was that happened to him. This 'memory blank' still haunts this man.
  
11. He then told me that that he had been trying to find Mr A. He said that he found him on the Friends Reunited website and made contact with him, but when he tried to get back in touch with him, Mr A had removed his information from the website. I think it was in the early 2000s when he contacted him. When I asked him why he wanted to

contact him, he said it was just to find out if Mr A was going to say anything to him. At the end of my conversation with this man, he asked me to help him find Mr A.

12. I had tried previously to find him but the initial search proved fruitless. In 2017, I discovered a Mr A who was living and working as a teacher and I obtained a photograph of him.
13. There were five men who had spoken to me about Mr A, two of whom at that stage had alleged abuse by him, so I sent the photograph round to all of them, and three of them came back and said that it was definitely him.
14. I then sent the photograph to the man who had asked me to help him find Mr A, and he also said that it was definitely him. I found another photograph of him as a young man and I sent that round to the same men and again they all said that it was definitely him.
15. I compiled a dossier on Mr A, a copy of which I have provided to the Inquiry, which contains the information I found on him from different sources. I have also provided a copy of a school photograph sent to me by a former pupil, which includes Mr A.
16. According to the community notes in the Corbie, he joined the teaching staff at Carlekemp as a [REDACTED] I have been told by the former pupils that he taught [REDACTED]

#### **Former prefect**

17. While carrying out the research, I managed to track down one of the men who had been part of Mr A's inner circle of boys. He was also a prefect. He discussed at some length the regime at Carlekemp and confirmed that the extent of physical and sexual abuse at the school was so common that no-one thought that it was unusual or something to make a fuss about. He said that there were lots of beatings and lots of "fiddling" and kissing and cuddling.

18. This former prefect said that he had discussed what was going on (the sexual abuse or "fiddling") with Mr A when he was at school, and he told me, in an email, what he recalled of the conversations. Mr A said to the prefect that he shouldn't let Father MFA do that, and he said that he had spoken to Father MFA about his behaviour and told him that he shouldn't be doing it. It appears that Father MFA's response was that it was his way of testing to see if the boys had been masturbating or not, and masturbating is a sin. If the boys got an erection, Father MFA would then know that they had been masturbating and they would have to confess for their sin. Mr A said to this prefect that that was complete nonsense and what Father MFA was doing was completely wrong. The man told me that the abuse never stopped and he wondered if the meeting between Mr A and Father MFA had ever taken place.
19. I was very interested by what this man was telling me, but when I suggested to him that this was information that I thought would be really important to go to the police and the Inquiry with, he said that only God can judge their behaviour. He also regards the abusers as victims, individuals unable to withstand the demands and pressures of being part of a religious institution. This man is the brother of someone who has told me that he was sexually abused.
20. The story about Father MFA is a fairly simple one. He would go into the dormitory at night to tell the boys bedtime stories, and he would go round bunk by bunk and put his hand underneath the covers and fiddle about with each boy while he was telling the story. I have been told that this went on consistently for years, because year after year when the new boys arrived at the school, they were told by the boys already there that this is what Father MFA does. One man had calculated that Father MFA had abused hundreds of boys over the time that he was a pupil at Carlekemp, which was four years, before he went up to Fort Augustus.
21. One of the former pupils spoke of a teacher possibly being arrested. He has given his testimony to the Inquiry, but he gave the wrong name of the teacher when he spoke to the Inquiry. He now knows that the teacher was Mr A. He told me he thought that Mr A had been arrested and that he had suddenly left the school.

22. I mentioned this to a number of other boys, who were peers of the boy who said he thought Mr A had left after being arrested. Only one of them seemed to remember something about it.

**Disclosures by Mr A of abuse at Carlekemp**

23. Given what I had been told about Mr A, I wanted to establish if he was still teaching, so I called his school. I asked whether Mr A was a member of staff there and the person I spoke to said that she would go and get him. I wasn't expecting to speak to him, but I approached the conversation in the same way as I would any conversation with someone who had been at the school. I told him who I was, that I worked for the BBC but was now retired, and that I was interested in hearing his experiences at the school, expecting that we would arrange a convenient time to have this conversation. He was on his lunch break and he immediately started telling me that sexual abuse was rife at the school.
24. He mentioned the names of monks whom he said were abusers, Father MFA and Father MEY and I think he might also have mentioned Father MEV in the first call. He described in quite graphic detail some of the abuse that had gone on, mentioning the names of some boys that were involved including a comment that a boy, whom he named, had tried to kiss him. I was so taken aback with what he was telling me, I told him that I felt uncomfortable about it and said that I suggested that we have the conversation at a more appropriate time and setting. He agreed that I could call him at home a couple of days later.
25. During this next conversation, he laid the whole thing out without any prompting on my part. Very periodically, I asked him a question.
26. I made notes during both of the telephone calls and compiled a note detailing what had been talked about.

27. He talked at some length about the scale and level of sexual abuse at Carlekemp, which was consistent with what I had heard previously from the boys. He said it was so routine that the boys regarded it as "normal". He described [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] Father [REDACTED] MFD [REDACTED] as a "gay sadist" who got a great deal of joy out of bullying and punishing the boys. He said the other monks, Father [REDACTED] MFA [REDACTED] Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] and Father [REDACTED] MEY [REDACTED], "divided" the school years. Father [REDACTED] MFA [REDACTED] was fond of fondling the older boys, Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] "took" the middle years, and Father [REDACTED] MEY [REDACTED] abused the younger boys but openly did it to all the year groups. He said that he never witnessed any of this directly. He said, "These men barely tolerated me", and the only person he spent any time with was Father [REDACTED] MFA [REDACTED]
28. He said that he had a study and there were repeated occasions when a group of boys would come to see him and tell him what was going on. They would regale him with accounts of their experiences with the monks. I made a point of asking him how this actually operated. It was because he was teaching [REDACTED] as well as [REDACTED] that he had a little study, and the boys would come to his study and he would close the door. This was their privilege because they were all older boys. This accords with what I had heard from the former pupils. The boys would tell Mr A of their own experiences and also what was happening to the younger boys.
29. I asked him if he was expected to do something with that information and his response was, "No, it was so normal that when they talked about it, it was in a joking manner". He said that there was no-one that he would have turned to, and that most of the boys, "starved of love, affection, and a long way from home, often with disengaged and emotionally detached parents found some comfort in all of this and that they were not alone in experiencing this".. He also said that he could do nothing about it because he had no real contact with the monks and that he was young and inexperienced.
30. When he talked about sexual abuse by [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] (Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED]), I said that we had not heard of allegations of sexual abuse about [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] at Carlekemp and he got quite angry and said something along the lines of, 'Are you saying that I am not telling the truth? I am telling you that this is what

happened'. I said that maybe if he hadn't seen this kind of activity from Father [REDACTED] MEV then maybe it hadn't happened at all. He said, [REDACTED] MEV was behaving like the others and was viewed in exactly the same way by the boys as the others". He said that is what he was told by the boys and that he was going to try and recall the names of the boys who came to tell him. He said that he recalled [REDACTED] MEV giving the boys [REDACTED] and described him as an aloof and withdrawn figure, handsome, tall, dark-haired, with slicked black hair and black glasses.

31. He did not think that there was excessive use of physical force at the school, although he said all of the staff were quite happy to dish it out. He did not include himself in that group. He talked of trips he made with a dozen or so boys down to the beach. He didn't make any reference to suggestions I made that lots of boys had talked about the cruel and sadistic behaviour of the staff towards them. Instead, he talked about the sexual preferences of Father [REDACTED] MFD and Father [REDACTED] MFA in their pain at being homosexuals coming from devout Catholic families where, it was accepted, a cure lay in a career as a priest. This was just his take on things. These men had not discussed their sexuality with him. It probably also came from the boys because I have heard from a number of boys about Father [REDACTED] MFD having a relationship with a music teacher from Haddington High School who was homosexual. Mr A described them as "tortured souls", and said that Father [REDACTED] MFD turned to violence and Father [REDACTED] MFA to alcohol as an escape. When I asked him how he got on with these men, he said he was neither a priest or a monk so he was kind of kept separate from them and had virtually no contact with them at all.
32. He said that he left Carlekemp in the summer of 1969 because he witnessed the beating of a boy by a monk and he wanted out of the place. He did not tell me anything of the circumstances surrounding the beating. He thought he knew the boy's name, but I have never managed to get him to confirm who the monk was. He has never entertained any further questioning about this.
33. I was interested to get further information about the beating Mr A witnessed for another reason. I had heard of two boys being severely beaten by Father [REDACTED] MFC

34. Mr A mentioned the names of a number of boys who had told him they had been sexually abused. I had heard of most of them. I had not spoken to all of them, but I recognised the names because by that stage I had compiled a long list of names from Carlekemp.
35. During the course of our two telephone conversations, I made it clear to him that I had spoken to a number of former pupils who had attended Carlekemp at the time he was there. I told him that the information that they had provided was given in confidence and that I wouldn't be able to tell him their names or provide any information relating to abuse. I told him that I had some names that I had found from old copies of the Corbie. When I mentioned some of those names, he recalled some and made references to certain boys being "in and out of bed" with each other and also said that he remembered seeing a boy sitting on a Father's lap. He named the boy and I knew about this boy separately as someone who was abused by Father [MFA]. I am surmising therefore that he was talking about Father [MFA]. He said that if I could provide him with a list of names that might help his poor memory. I told him that I thought his powers of recollection were very good, given that I had called him out of the blue to ask him about events that had happened some fifty years ago. I explained that I didn't have access to school rolls but had to piece together fragments of information from a wide variety of sources. He said that he would do what he could to help and gave me an email address. He has never indicated whether he has seen the 'Sins of our Father' film.
36. It was surprising to me that he had been so forthcoming with information, particularly about the sexual abuse, as this had been volunteered without any prompting on my part. He did not ask me if I was recording the conversation, although I told him that I would take notes but these would only be for my own research requirements and as an aide-memoire for future reference. I said that I would email to confirm that our conversation would be treated in confidence.
37. I have not spoken to Mr A since the second telephone call but we have exchanged email correspondence since then where he has repeated what he told me about the sexual abuse that took place while he was there. In one email, he said that in his time

at Carlekemp, "I am sure 99% sure there was no serious physical abuse...As to sexual abuse it was rife". In another, he discussed this in more detail referring to Father [REDACTED] MFD, [REDACTED] SNR, Father [REDACTED] MFA and the two Australian monks, Father [REDACTED] MEY and Father [REDACTED] MEV. "The identity of the two primary victims of the Australians was never a secret to anyone. I initially thought the activities of these three priests, abhorrent as they seemed, must be known by their [REDACTED] SNR (Father) [REDACTED] MFD. To this day, I cannot think otherwise. In fact, in the absence of Fr [REDACTED] MFD (a cold, disdainful and arrogant man) the remaining three seemed almost to have an unspoken pact that said "You do yours and I'll do mine". [REDACTED] MEV thus took charge (please forgive the expression) of the youngest available children, Father [REDACTED] MEY the middle and [REDACTED] MFA only the upper forms. These ideas were openly discussed in front of me by the older boys"

#### **Concerns arising from correspondence with Mr A**

38. I have alerted Mr A on numerous occasions that he has information that could be of relevance both to the Inquiry and to the police. I have told him that I can't tell him what former pupils have told me, nor can I give him their names, but I have given him a justification as to why he should come forward. I have told him that I am doing what I'm doing to try and help and support those men who have come forward because their lives have been damaged as a result of their experience at the school, at a time that he was there. He has offered to help but has never come back in any of his responses to me saying whether he intends to do this.
39. I have told him that I have given a statement to the Inquiry and have explained the protocols of the Inquiry, basically telling him step-by-step how it works. I have sent him links to the Inquiry website. I have told him that I am happy to assist him to make contact if he has any difficulties.
40. I am aware that there are a number of inconsistencies with his testimony. For example, he said that he had left Carlekemp because of the violence he had witnessed but in an email that he was 99% sure "that there was no physical abuse". There are others,

but all of these could be attributed to a recent period of poor health or simply faulty recollection. But what I found most surprising in my contact with Mr A was the detail that he could recall about sexual abuse and his willingness to share that with me. He volunteered the suggestion that he was at the school when a paedophile ring was in operation which included a monk whom the Crown are trying to extradite from Australia. Mr A has followed a career in teaching and has pointed out the high regard with which he is held within the profession. He knows of the damage that abuse can cause in childhood and I have explained how his contribution to the Inquiry and/or to the police might assist those who found themselves experiencing this trauma. To date, as far as I know, he has not contacted either.

- 41. I have not spoken to the police about the information I have obtained on Mr A. He has informed me that he is no longer in the same school due to ill-health but intends to continue teaching.

**Other information**

- 42. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed....  .....

Dated..... 19/08/19 .....