

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Sean O'Donovan

Support person present: No

1. My name is Sean Roderick O'Donovan. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1949. At birth, I had a second middle name, Benedict, but I had that removed. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before Fort Augustus School, Loch Ness, Inverness-shire

2. I was born in Hull. I lived with my father [REDACTED], my mother [REDACTED].
3. My father serviced bombers during the war and volunteered to be a pilot. He trained in America for a year and then became a decorated pilot. He was over-awed by authority. My father had a Welsh accent and an Irish name so he took elocution lessons from the father of the actor Richard Burton. He was determined to leave his background in Port Talbot behind. He was determined that his children would go to public school.
4. As my father was in the RAF, we moved around a lot, which is why I went to boarding school. Officers in the forces got a huge discount for children going to boarding school. We stayed in Witham where the bombers were based, next we lived in Coningsby, and then we moved to Singapore when I was three years old. In Singapore, I contracted Polio, a mild case.

5. Next, we moved to Lessingham in Lincolnshire. I had an IQ test at Lessingham primary school, it said that I was near genius. Years later, I joined Mensa and they tested me. I got their highest possible mark.
6. We moved to Bracknell in Berkshire, I went to St Mary's Church of England primary school. We lived in Winkfield Row.
7. In primary school, you would get a slap but it was nothing too serious. It was normal at that time. At my first day in primary school, I wasn't involved in the school assembly because I was Catholic. However, the head teacher came in and she hit a number of other kids at the back of assembly, for mucking about. She used a wooden ruler to hit them. Those children would have been five years old. I can remember how differently the teachers behaved when there was a visit from an education inspector, compared to how they normally behaved. As soon as the inspector had gone, it would be a return to barking orders and liberal use of corporal punishment.
8. After leaving primary school, I went to Alder Wasley Hall preparatory school, in Derbyshire. I was there between seven and eleven years of age. Due to my date of birth, when I started school at the age of seven, the other children in my class were eight or nine years old. I was emotionally shattered when I was at school due to my illness in Singapore and due to contracting Glandular Fever. I passed the Common Entrance exam when I was ten years old.
9. My parents decided to move to Scotland when my father left the RAF, just before I was twelve years old. I was given the choice to go to Belmont Abbey, the same boarding school as [REDACTED] or to go to Fort Augustus, which was only twenty miles away from my parents' house. I chose Fort Augustus for that reason. I had no ability to judge one school from another. I didn't realise it at the time, but having my parents nearby, where they could visit me, gave me a lot of protection at Fort Augustus.

Fort Augustus Abbey school, Loch Ness, Inverness-shire 1961 to 1965

10. Fort Augustus was originally a Jacobean artillery fort. There were four bastions with buildings in the middle. It was destroyed by Bonnie Prince Charlie and handed over to Lord Lovatt, who gave it to the Church who rebuilt it. It then became the biggest building in Scotland at the time. They had built the Abbey, and it was connected to the other school buildings by corridors. In front you had the Abbey building, and behind that, the main school building with a clock above the entrance, and rooms to the left and right. On the first floor were the classrooms and in the attic was the dormitory.

Routine at Fort Augustus

First day

11. My parents dropped me off on the first day, and then they left. Another pupil walked up to me and asked if I was ██████████ brother. I said no, and asked who ██████████ was. I was then told I was the spitting image of a boy called ██████████ who had died the previous year in 1960.
12. ██████████ and others had been out walking along the loch-side. A fisherman found ██████████ body in the loch. The suggestion was that he must have fallen in, but the area where they were walking featured some high cliffs, where a waterfall fed in to the loch. There is some suggestion that other boys were throwing stones at him, when they were all on the cliff-top. I found these things out because I was intrigued by ██████████, because people said I looked like him. There was no police investigation into ██████████ death, he was just buried in the grounds of the school. ██████████ death was marked down as an accident, but under English law, I think it would have been treated as manslaughter.
13. Every three weeks, the boys would be taken out onto the moors overlooking Loch Ness, for something like a camping trip for the day. You would hike, make a campfire, and cook food. Mr ██████████ MIF, a teacher at school, said later on the former pupils website ██████████ that, "No-one meant for him to die." I don't know where Mr

MIF fitted into the story, he was [REDACTED] a teacher. He may have overheard things in the staffroom. A former pupil, [REDACTED] said on the site, "I was there that day, we were throwing rocks around. What happened to [REDACTED] made me stop bullying." I think they picked on him because he was small and weak, like I was.

14. After that first boy spoke to me about [REDACTED], I was just left to it. I wasn't shown round by a member of staff or even another pupil. I went inside and started asking where things were. One of the things you had to get as part of your kit was a travel rug. That was put in your trunk, which was sent on ahead to the school, so you had to look out for your travel rug on a bed to know where you were going to be sleeping.
15. There was one massive dormitory in the attic, with partitions as you went along, but no curtains at the front. The partitions divided boys based on their age. The senior boys had a separate dormitory. There were about 140 boys in total, from the age of 12 to 18. My housemaster had a bed in the dormitory. His was the only one with a curtain across the front.
16. There were two houses when I went to school, they were Lovatt and Vaughan. Vaughan House was named after Cardinal Vaughan, and Lovatt was named after Lord Lovatt, one of the founders of the school. Lord Lovatt sent his own children to a different school, not to Fort Augustus.
17. I was in Lovatt house and the housemaster of my house was Father MFE. MFE was the religious name that he had taken as a priest. His nicknames were MFE and MFE because he came from [REDACTED]. He had been at Fort Augustus [REDACTED] to teach. The housemaster is supposed to provide care for all the boys in the house. He is supposed to provide Pastoral care, to make sure everyone was alright, but MFE was only interested in his first fifteen rugby team. The housemaster for Vaughan was Father MFG.

Mornings and bedtime

18. We would be woken at 6.45 am. An electric bell rang out all over the place. You went from the dormitory to the washroom as fast as you could, you got dressed and went to morning mass at 7.00 or 7.15. You then had breakfast and started the school day.

Mealtimes/Food

19. At breakfast during the week, we always ate porridge. We had eggs on Scottish pancakes at the weekend. I hardly ever saw fruit or green vegetables, it was always turnips and things like that. There was a lot of greasy fried food. You had to eat it, but I eventually refused to go in for breakfast. The staff finally noticed this, but they had to be careful with me because I saw my parents every few days. Eventually they agreed that my parents could provide cornflakes for me to eat at school. I didn't realise it at the time but that was a victory for me.
20. Years after leaving school, in my mid-twenties, I suffered from a slipped disc when I was working in London. My boss recommended someone to me, and I went to see a top surgeon, called Stoddart, in Harley Street. He was also an Osteopath. He looked at my x rays and said that there was clear evidence that I had suffered from malnutrition between the ages of twelve and sixteen, which was the time I was at Fort Augustus. I also reached puberty very late. I don't know if that was due to the diet at the school. I did consider suing the school over the deformation of my spine, but I couldn't afford to hire lawyers, and it may have been time-barred.
21. Everyone ate together at school, including some of the staff. They had long tables in rows, with one row for Vaughan, one for Lovatt, and with the housemasters sitting at the ends. The teachers had a separate table, they weren't concerned with any discipline of the boys, so no one was monitoring whether or not you were eating your food.

22. A doctor in Inverness said that I would probably benefit from more fresh fruit and vegetables, so my parents brought me in a basket of fruit and some biscuits every week. I think that was when I was thirteen or fourteen.
23. There was a tuck shop. I can't remember when it was open. You were not allowed into the village shops, except every three weeks when you had a day out on the moor. You could go into the shops to get food for that.

Washing/bathing

24. There was a huge row of sinks in the washroom, which was in the basement. There were about fifty to a seventy sinks all in rows, along one wall and in back to back rows running parallel to the long wall. On the opposite side were the shower heads. There were no shower cubicles, no curtains, no privacy. Father [REDACTED] MFE would be there, watching the boys showering. We had a stand up wash or a shower. Father [REDACTED] MFE would sometimes decide that the whole school should have a shower and he would stand at one end, chatting away to the rugby team. There wasn't a showerhead for every boy, you just had to crowd in. It was very intimidating as a young child, because you are there with naked boys, some of whom were pre-pubescent, and some who were post-pubescent. I would always wash as quickly as I could. I would get out, get a towel and get dressed. There was plenty of hot water but I never had a bath at Fort Augustus for the first year.
25. Eventually, somebody said to the school that we should be having regular baths, so we started to get a bath every one or two weeks. There were about twelve or fifteen baths up on a platform in the washroom, but still within the open space of the washroom, there were no curtains or partitions. You went for a bath, a whole form at a time. I was the youngest in my form, so you had pre-pubescent and post-pubescent boys together, and comments get made. The prefects were around at bath time, just for the general behaviour but they weren't interested any more than anyone else was.

School

26. The classrooms were scattered all round the building. After morning lessons you got a couple of hours off. That was from around 1.00 pm to 4.00 pm. You could go out and muck about in the grounds or you could go into the village. Being allowed in the village was stopped after a couple of seniors burnt down a crofter's shed. We had more lessons until about 6.00 pm, then a meal, and then we had prep for a couple of hours.
27. [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] was Father [REDACTED] MFF [REDACTED]. He was [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] for three years when I was there, but then he was booted out. The story at the school was that two boys went to the police about being beaten by [REDACTED] MFF [REDACTED], so he was moved to Rome until the heat died down. I didn't know the names of those boys. The next [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] was Father [REDACTED] MKT [REDACTED] he was [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] for about a year when I was at Fort Augustus.
28. We had other teachers too. Some were Brothers of the order, and some were lay teachers. There was accommodation for them to stay at the Abbey, if they had nowhere else to stay. There was Father Andrew McKillop, Father [REDACTED] MEW [REDACTED], Father [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] who taught [REDACTED], and Father [REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED] who taught [REDACTED].
29. The teaching was appalling, it was of very poor quality. I realised this after leaving Fort Augustus, when I went to King Edward's school in Bath. I got seven O Levels but only one Higher at Fort Augustus, so I had to repeat year twelve when I went to Bath. It should have been easy, repeating a year of study you had just completed, but I could see from the curriculum at Bath that they were teaching things that were missing from the curriculum at Fort Augustus. There were huge gaps in the teaching for all subjects.
30. I was made to feel like a failure at Fort Augustus. Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] once told me that I was lazy because I got a higher mark in my exam than I had done for the classwork during that year. His position was that if I had been working hard, my marks throughout the year would have been higher. I told him that he was wrong, that the

higher exam mark showed that I had learned from mistakes that I had made in the coursework, it meant that I had been working. He just sort of shrugged and accepted that, but I think he was trying it on, testing me to see if I was weak enough to agree with him. I think if I had accepted his position, he would have beaten me for being lazy.

31. Later, I found that I could argue back with Father [MFF] as well, and he would back down. When I realised that, I thought I should have been doing that from the beginning but I was a child, I didn't know.

Leisure time

32. We played a lot of sports, athletics, football, rugby, and cricket. Games were compulsory, although athletics was not. I hated games. I wasn't physically capable, or interested in them. I was humiliated on the rugby pitch by Father [MFG]. One time, at the end of a game, Father [MFG] said that I had not played hard enough because my knees were not muddy. He made me stand while he rubbed mud on my knees. I was twelve and all the other boys were about fourteen. All the other boys were laughing at me. It added to me being an easy target for bullying.

Trips/Holidays

33. I went home at Easter, summer and Christmas holidays. I was taken on two trips to Inverness to see the London Philharmonic Orchestra. There was a sailing club that took trips, but I wasn't involved in that.

Birthdays and Christmas

34. Your birthday was not celebrated or recognised at Fort Augustus.

Visits/Inspections

35. I saw my family every weekend. Family were not allowed to visit the school, but Fort Augustus had a chapel and had mass on Sunday that locals could come to. My father was Catholic, so he and my mother came along, although my mother wasn't Catholic. I would get to spend about an hour with them after Mass, before lunch.
36. In the Catholic Church, you sent your children to a Catholic school if it was available. There were no inspections, because being a Church school meant that it was a private school.

Religious instruction

37. We had mass every morning, as well as Sunday mass. We had morning prayers and evening prayers. We had Vespers on Sunday evening. On certain religious dates, we would have additional masses or religious events. It was a very religious school, and it was compulsory to attend. Very compulsory.
38. The authority of the Church was intense. A former pupil, [REDACTED] in his book [REDACTED], wrote that he helped serving Mass when John Lane Fox was a priest at Fort Augustus. He had been a chaplain in World War 1 and he lost a couple of fingers due to a stray grenade. He was considered a living Saint. That was the mind-set of those in charge of us.

Healthcare

39. The school boasted that the it was in a very healthy setting, with a doctor visiting three times per week. If it was that healthy, then why three visits a week from the doctor?
40. The Matron was a State Registered Nurse. She was a cold fish. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

41. The sick bay was always occupied with boys who were sick with something. I was in sickbay frequently, as I suffered from migraine headaches as a child. I didn't get any help with my stammer at Fort Augustus.

Running away

42. People did run away on a couple of occasions, but they would be brought back and dealt with by [REDACTED] MFF [REDACTED]. He would beat them black and blue. I remember hearing about reference to this on the old boys website

Bed Wetting

43. I was not aware of any problem with bed wetting.

Abuse at Fort Augustus

44. In religious council, monks are subject to the authority of the Abbot or Bishop. That doesn't apply to lay persons. We were somehow told, although I don't think there was a direct conversation with any one person, that exception didn't apply to us as schoolboys because we were Catholic. We were under the rule of obedience to the Church and therefore to the authority of those acting on behalf of the Church. Our parents were told they couldn't challenge it. It was part of the general ethos of the school. We were told that in the rules of the order of Saint Benedict, that corporal punishment of children was acceptable, but that was a lie, it didn't say that at all.
45. I was bullied by other boys because I was physically small and English. Many of the boys hated the English. My nickname at school was gormless. I had been bullied at prep school, so I was already quite cowed. Other boys were bullied too. I remember [REDACTED] had red hair and a bad temper, he would lash out with his hockey stick when he was bullied.
46. I remember the [REDACTED] teacher was called [REDACTED] MIH [REDACTED]. The [REDACTED] MIH [REDACTED] Clan sent many of their boys to Fort Augustus, which provided a great deal of finance for

the school. Mr [REDACTED] MIH had been a pilot in the Fleet Air Arm, but only after World War 2. He was kind of a Walter Mitty character. He claimed that he had flown a Spitfire, landed it on the A9, taxied up to a petrol station, filled up, and then took off again.

47. He put a question up on the blackboard and went round the class asking all the boys for their answers to it. When I gave my answer, it was very different from the type of answers that the others had given, and all the other boys laughed. He kept going round the rest of the class and then told them that I had got the right answer. He should have stopped the laughing when it began because it made me feel intimidated. He shouldn't have used the other boys' collective ridicule against me as a means of exercising control over the class, and when he then told them at the end that I had the right answer, he was giving the rest of the class another reason to unite against me.
48. Another time, I had to put books into pigeonholes. Mr [REDACTED] MIH asked me where I had put the books. I said I had put them in the cubbyholes and he ridiculed me for using this term. He seemed to think it was a childish expression, but it is a proper word, just not one that he chose to use. It is derived from a Turkish word meaning cave. His manner and language of ridicule was bullying.
49. In my final year at Fort Augustus, I was ill, I had a rash all over my body. I was put in sickbay, in isolation. Once it was established that I wasn't infectious, I was released back to school. [REDACTED] MKT kept verbally abusing me by saying, "The spotted creature from the swamp has returned." I can only think that he was some kind of socially inept man, who thought he was making a joke. However, as [REDACTED] SNR he should have known that I was suffering from bullying and he was only adding to the problem.
50. As I subsequently learned, during my training in the Army to become an instructor, there were certain practices that could be considered bullying which were prohibited. You don't have a prohibited practice unless someone has already done that thing, so that it can be recognised as unacceptable and then prohibited. A good teacher might only do something like that once or twice, but a bad teacher keeps on doing it. By

ridiculing or bullying one boy, you get a laugh from the rest of the class and it makes you the leader of the pack, but this type of emotional abuse causes suicide.

51. When I was twelve, in the second term of school, I tried to commit suicide. It was because of general bullying and the regime at the school. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I thought about one of the monks, Brother [REDACTED] MNS [REDACTED]. He was a [REDACTED]. He was a very kind man, he would always say to new boys who were upset, not to worry about being the smallest in the school. He would recognise if pupils were lonely and would be around for them. He took time to do that out-with his monastic duties. I thought I couldn't let him down, [REDACTED]
52. There was one teacher, A K Anderson, who taught English and Music, he left the school because he felt it was so uncivilised, as did another teacher from Inverness, Mr McKechin.
53. There was a boy who set fire to the school, he was expelled for that. His parents were just told to come and pick him up. I am not aware of any other punishment he faced. He set the fire but then reported it straight away.
54. Discipline was the strap or the tawse. You could be belted for anything. It was usually [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED], Father [REDACTED] MFF [REDACTED] or my housemaster Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] who did it. Mostly it was the housemaster, Father [REDACTED] MFF [REDACTED] would step in if it was something serious. He didn't use the tawse, he used a cane that was like a walking stick. We were told by them, if a child misbehaves, they should be taught with stripes, meaning the marks that would be left on your body by a belt or stick. It happened to me on one occasion. Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] tested pupils on the Catechism, the teachings of the Catholic Church. I didn't get it right, so I got twelve strokes of the belt. I had to go up and wait outside his office and then got twelve strokes of the belt, six on each hand.
55. Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] was a sado-masochist. When I was seven, I went to prep school where the punishment was a smack with the hand or on the bottom, over the

top of your pyjamas. It was a notional thing. I found in certain circumstances that it was enjoyable. I read *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, by T.E. Lawrence. I read that when the Turks captured him he described his treatment in captivity. It has subsequently been suggested that this was a fantasy, but from the description of punishment he received, and his response to it, he was of a similar persuasion.

56. I once said something to Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] to the effect that I knew what he was like and that I was of a similar persuasion. By this I mean that I implied to [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] that I knew he was a sadomasochist because I recognised that my gratification from the experience was akin to what he displayed, that his beatings of boys were other than merely the exercise of discipline within the school setting. With a certain amount of hindsight, I can see that after making that comment, his beatings of me were less severe. It seems my comment mitigated against his enjoyment of beating me. This was a victory for me, but the other consequence was that I couldn't tell my parents about his behaviour because that would have involved explaining my own sexual persuasions, and how do you discuss that with your parents at that age?
57. Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] would be almost drooling with pleasure when punishing boys. It was quite horrible. One night, someone went in to his office and stole his tawse. He said at assembly the next day that this was terrible, because it was a wooden handled tawse, the one that he had been beaten with as a child. It seems like a strange sort of souvenir to keep, unless you were into it.
58. I would describe Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] attitude towards beatings as whimsical. He could ignore misbehaviour when he wanted, but then fly into a steaming fury for no apparent reason and start beating boys.
59. Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] beat me around four times per term. It was fairly regular. His door would be open when he did this. You could see other boys when they were being beaten, and they could see you.
60. Father [REDACTED] MFE [REDACTED] could go into a rage over something trivial. When I was fourteen or fifteen, he came into the class. Someone was messing about. He sent the whole class down

for a beating, even the ones who weren't in the room when he arrived. Those in the class who were in Lovatt, MFE house, went to his private study for a beating, those in Father MFG house were sent to his study for a beating. There were about twenty of us.

61. Father MFE came into the study hall one night. He said if any boy needed a Jockstrap, they were to come to his study and he would make sure that it fitted properly.
62. Father MFE approved of bullying, he opined that it made a man of you. I don't know if he meant the bully, or the one being bullied.
63. Mr Fowles, one of the teachers, saw me being bullied by six other pupils. It wasn't that there was anything particularly physical about it, but they were crowded round me, corralling me, shouting verbal abuse, and name-calling. They made me sit on a revolving chair, whirling me round. If I had come off that chair, I could easily have been injured when I crashed into something. Between that and the fact that it was a mob of boys bullying me, I was scared out of my wits. Mr Fowles came in and sent them down to the library to get books so it stopped, but he didn't do anything about the bullying. He didn't do anything about the fact that I was being bullied by that particular group of boys. They weren't punished for it.
64. Prefects were not supposed to discipline you physically, but they did it. They weren't allowed to do it, but they did. They would use a slipper, a hairbrush, or something. This happened in front of other children. The staff might be around when the prefects were throwing their weight about but not when they hit anyone with an implement.
65. I remember one prefect hitting a boy with a clothes-brush or a slipper, just for the sheer enjoyment of bullying. The prefects seemed to more absent than around, there were no regular patrols. The prefects could just wander about. They would see bullying and do nothing about it. They would only stop things if they felt like it, if the perpetrator had annoyed them somehow, for example.

66. [REDACTED] was a bully, but in the last year, he realised what he was doing. He changed, and semi apologised to me.
67. [REDACTED] boasted that he had been hit five hundred times in corporal punishment. His younger brother was in my class and he joined in with the bullying. I can't remember his name, something [REDACTED].
68. Father [REDACTED] MKT didn't beat anyone or employ corporal punishment, as far as I am aware, but Father [REDACTED] MFF did. Every three weeks, there was a test. If you failed a test, [REDACTED] MFF would beat you. He didn't use a cane, it was like a walking stick, about three-quarters of an inch thick. It is worth noting that there were no such tests in the last three week of term, so that there were no marks on you when you went home to your parents.
69. When I was twelve, in a study period, there were about twenty boys in the class. Some of us were talking in the class, and I was taken to [REDACTED] MFF office. I got four strokes of this stick, on the backside. It was five weeks before the bruises started to heal. There were clear stripes showing at four weeks.
70. Some of the boys got more than four strokes, some of them got eight. On another occasion, Matron had to treat the wounds of one boy because he had been hit so hard by [REDACTED] MFF, that he was bleeding. I can't recall his name.
71. It was only Fathers [REDACTED] MFF, [REDACTED] MFE and [REDACTED] MFG who caned or belted pupils. The other teachers had to give out lines, or they could send you to [REDACTED] SNR or your housemaster. They might occasionally throw a blackboard rubber or a piece of chalk across the room. However, Father [REDACTED] MEW would rap his knuckles on top of boys' heads until the boy was crying. It could be absolutely anything that would result in him doing that. They always had the threat of sending you to the housemaster, we lived in fear of that.
72. The school was renowned for homosexuality. My parents were warned about this before I went there, but my father decided to ignore this. I was subject to some

homosexual advances by other pupils, but I wasn't a good-looking boy and I was not physically developed. I didn't reach puberty until I was about fifteen or sixteen years old, during my last term at school. Also, I didn't respond to any such approach in a reciprocal way. Those boys weren't trying to force themselves on anyone. If they didn't get a friendly response, they would just leave you alone.

73. [REDACTED], a pupil, was a nasty piece of work. He was a bully, but he fluctuated and made homosexual advances towards me. As I hadn't reached puberty, I didn't have anything to offer him. It did tend to make you a bit more wary of who you were hanging around with.
74. There were rumours of sexual abuse by prefects, but I didn't see anything. The prefects did have little screened off rooms, but I am not aware of any pupils being taken into a prefects room as part of any punishment.
75. I don't believe some of the stories of abuse that are being told now, because they just don't fit in with the structure of Fort Augustus, there would have been too many people around. It is very difficult to get privacy at boarding school. Rape would have been rare. I feel that people are now using that word as a metaphor, to describe abuse in general. Some of the stories just don't ring true.
76. One guy gave me an account, in private communications, of abuse he had suffered at Fort Augustus, but he was plagiarising a book by [REDACTED] called [REDACTED] [REDACTED] about a boy who suffered abuse at a school in Dublin. I know that, because I had read the same book. I recognised the exact terms that he used to describe specific comments allegedly made by a monk during the course of abuse.
77. Conversely, I once overheard one boy saying, "That's the second bar of soap I've had to throw away this week." I realised later that if someone was raped, they would want to clean themselves. Given where and what they were cleaning, they wouldn't want to use that bar of soap again and nor would anyone else. I didn't realise this at the time, I just remember thinking it was a strange statement to make.

78. You have to bear in mind that people who join a monastery are not sexually normal. Someone with normal sexual appetites is not going to become a monk. The expression, "Living like a monk" has negative connotations, of being sexually abnormal. I am not saying they were wrong to be monastic, but you are starting from a position of sexual abnormality, within the setting of a boys' boarding school. It meant that you had some of the wrong people, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, with young children. Things were bound to happen.
79. When I was at school, I was not aware of any homosexuality with the staff, but when I went on to the official Fort Augustus website, [www_corbie_com](http://www.corbie.com), as an adult, saying I was not aware of any such behaviour, I got responses from others saying that it most definitely had happened.
80. These other former pupils went on to contact me privately. I set up a Yahoo! group forum that I controlled, called Fort Augustus Old Boys. I felt there were people who couldn't speak on the main Corbie site because they would be shouted down. I was in charge of who could join my forum. You had to give your name, and when you attended Fort Augustus. You could tell whether other people were describing their experiences of being there, or just telling stories. With the posts onto my own web forum, I am satisfied that what these people are saying is genuine.
81. The whole regime of the school was oppressive and terrifying. Both because of the abuse by the headmaster, housemasters, teachers, and prefects, but also because of the bullying by other pupils. It wasn't that the bullying was particularly physical, it was the group intimidation. When you found yourself surrounded by six boys shouting abuse, you didn't dare fight back as it might make matters worse.

Reporting of abuse at Fort Augustus

82. I did tell my father about the abuse, twice. The first time, he said he would speak to **SNR** which made it worse. My Father told me he had spoken to Father **MFF** about my allegations, but he just denied it all. I was not present. The second time I told him, my father said I must have just been making it up.

83. Although Brother MNS was very sympathetic and approachable, I didn't report to him the abuse or bullying I was suffering. He knew about the bullying and the punishment beatings anyway. It wasn't something he was ignorant of, but he couldn't do anything about it. Also, you didn't want to burden Brother MNS because of his own problems due to his treatment by the other staff. He was ridiculed by the other staff, treated as if he was an idiot, even though he was a very intelligent man.

Leaving Fort Augustus

84. I left Fort Augustus when I was fifteen, just after the exams. I turned sixteen that August. I went to King Edward's school in Bath, which gave me breathing space. I can remember on my first day there, I thought to myself how civilised the place was, compared to Fort Augustus. After King Edward's I went to Churches school and that was even better.

Life after school

85. After school, I started working in a local bank as a junior clerk, but I didn't enjoy it. My father wanted me to have a proper career. He found me a position at a merchant bank in London. While working there, I got friendly with a chap in Weybridge, he showed me that I could make friends. It was nice being able to go for a pint with someone, where you just enjoyed each other's company.
86. Next, while still working at the bank, I joined the Territorial Army, when I was twenty years old. I found that you were accepted instantly, for who you were. It taught me self-confidence, it showed me I had skills. Being in the TA helped me get over these difficulties but Fort Augustus was still in the background.
87. The TA persuaded me to join the regular army. I completed the basic training but I didn't get a commission as an officer. Back in the TA, they put me through training to become a weapons instructor and I became one of the best weapons instructors in the

unit. It gave me huge self-confidence. I went from being a junior accounts clerk, to chief accountant in four years. Then I became a company secretary.

88. Life in the city came to an end and I had the confidence to start my own accountancy business.
89. I married, and my wife and I had twin girls in 1990. At that time, I was working from home, which gave me time to spend with my children. My wife and I separated on 1 January 2000. The girls stayed with their mother, but I retained contact with them. Both my daughters have become successful in their respective fields.
90. I retired in 2007, on the advice of my doctor, because of stress. I didn't seek any counselling regarding my time at Fort Augustus then, or at any time previously. I have not sought any counselling since retiring either.

Impact

91. My time at Fort Augustus affected my self-esteem. It made it difficult for me to make friends, but that may be due to mild Asperger's syndrome, which I may suffer from. I have never had a formal diagnosis, I have just conducted my own research into the condition. I left Fort Augustus in June 1965 and there have probably been only a dozen days that I haven't thought about what went on there. I think about how I could have prevented it, or changed things. Then I remember I was just a child at the time.
92. Something I want to get across to the Inquiry is the constant fear that we were living under. The fear of being beaten by staff. It wasn't a question of how often these things happened, it was a question of how often it might happen. It was the fear that it might happen at any moment. You really did not know what was going to happen the next day. You tried to put the fear to the back of your mind, try to normalise it.
93. I had a stammer at Fort Augustus, and the regime and the bullying made it worse. I didn't get rid of the last vestiges of my stammer until about five or six years ago.

94. Polio affected the reflexes in my ankles, so I can't blame that on Fort Augustus, but they should have been told about it, and they should have been able to accommodate that condition, or compensate for it during physical activities.
95. The poor diet at Fort Augustus affected my spine, and it may have been the reason for my delayed puberty.
96. I want an open and formal apology for what happened at Fort Augustus. I want admissions that there wasn't a proper diet, that there was overuse of corporal punishment, that the education was sub-standard, and that my situation at the school was not my fault. They always used to say it was your fault for things. It was your fault if you did something that resulted in you being hit.
97. I did go back to Fort Augustus in 1980. I wanted to prove the place couldn't hurt me anymore. I had a look around, and Father [REDACTED] MFG saw me and recognised me. I accepted his invitation to lunch, out of politeness. During coffee, Father [REDACTED] MKT came in and his face turned white when he saw me.

Reporting of Abuse

98. I made a report to the police around about 2012. It was a statement taken by the police in Scunthorpe, on behalf of the Scottish police. It was after I attended a Survivor Scotland meeting. That was something set up by the Scottish Government, it was a pre-cursor to this Inquiry. [REDACTED], another former pupil, suggested reporting matters to the police. I did so because of the Scots law requirement for corroboration. I have often heard of allegations where it was stated that because nobody else had seen something, or endured it, there was insufficient evidence. I wanted to prevent that.
99. I told the police everything about the physical abuse by Father [REDACTED] MFE and Father [REDACTED] MFF. Father [REDACTED] MFG didn't really affect me directly.

100. I am aware of allegations of abuse when I was at Fort Augustus, and the Vatican covering it up. When I was there, a monk was returned to Fort Augustus from a parish in Glasgow because he had shown too much interest in little girls. I think his name was [REDACTED] but he was one of two [REDACTED] who were accused of this. It was well known that he was like that, and it was well known that the Vatican had covered it up. The following year, when I left Fort Augustus, the Vatican admitted that they had covered this up.
101. Thomas Yeo, who was the Abbot president of the Benedictine order at the time, sent [REDACTED]. This was after the place was no longer a school. Yeo said openly on television that the reasoning was that he would find support there, i.e. there was at least one other person at the Abbey who was a known paedophile. It staggers belief that this was the practice the Church followed, when we are talking about serious criminal offences that should have been dealt with by the police.
102. I am aware of Jimmy Saville visiting the school but that was after my time there. On the Corbie website, the school denied that he had ever been there, but I saw a photograph online, of him sitting in the school library, surrounded by boys. I didn't take a copy of this photograph, nor did I keep a note of the link to it. I have no way of knowing if he did anything to any of the boys when he was there, but the point is that the school denied he had been there. They covered it up. They were willing and able to cover it up.
103. The Corbie forum is no longer active, but my former pupil's web forum is still up. It is called Fort Augustus Old Boys. It is a private forum. There is not as much activity on the site as there used to be. I am in charge of the forum and I did kick one person off it, for using vile language. He stated he wants £200,000 compensation. I have a mistrust of anyone seeking compensation with a pre-determined amount in mind. I have encouraged others to come forward to the Inquiry to report abuse.
104. On the Corbie forum, [REDACTED] posted that after leaving Fort Augustus he became a helicopter pilot in the navy. He was asked to take the helicopter to Fort Augustus. He

landed in the playing fields across the road from the Abbey, but stayed inside the helicopter. He couldn't face going into the building. Mr MIF was the only one of the teachers who responded to this post and told he was held in such high regard. responded by calling him a lying swine, as Mr MIF had been one of the worst bullies he had encountered at the school.

105. contributed to the discussion, on Corbie. He claimed he was bullied at school but eventually found friends. He complained on the school web site that he was bullied at Fort Augustus, but he was a big lad. He was in the first fifteen rugby team by the time he was fourteen. He did have a stammer, so I can imagine him being bullied as a six, or seven year old, but not when he was playing rugby and shaving daily.
106. MMG was the year above me at school. He became a teacher, and he was the first one who confirmed, on the Corbie website, that what I said about the bullying and violent regime at Fort Augustus was accurate.

Lessons to be learned

107. When you are a child at school, you don't know if what is going on is right or wrong, so you don't know if you should be complaining about a particular thing.
108. I want to get across to the Inquiry how easily difficulties can arise. Some go into teaching for the wrong reasons, the angry ones who dislike children, and take things out on them. Then there are the other ones, who like children too much.
109. There should be at least two adults in charge of a class of children, to avoid problems. One adult acts as a watchdog for the other, and vice versa. The Roman republic survived for 500 years because one Consul would be watching another. We are starting to see that control and protection with the introduction of classroom assistants.
110. I did have experience of education after Fort Augustus as I was a school governor, through local government activity. I also acted as a classroom assistant at a school in

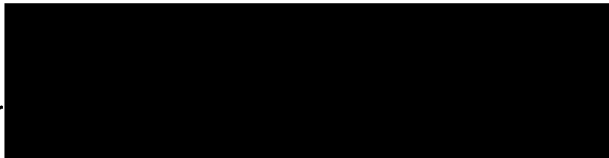
Scunthorpe. It was a difficult school and I helped with maths, but it was a two-hour journey each way, so I couldn't sustain that role. My own daughters were also subject to abuse at their local primary school. Their teacher got some form of gratification by refusing to allow children to go to the toilet, so they soiled themselves. I had the misfortune to have to deal with that disclosure and to confront the school, along with other parents.

- 111. I want the Inquiry to stop what has been happening. Things that happened forty years ago, happened. You have to move on, but you can't move on until you learn from what went wrong otherwise, you end up with new allegations coming to light, and a new Inquiry years from now.

Other information

- 112. 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..



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Dated.....

31. 1. 19

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