

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Colin Patrick Joseph Stephen GEDDES

Support person present: No

Solicitor: Annie Liddle, Clyde & Co. Solicitors

1. My name is Colin Patrick Joseph Stephen Geddes. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1946. Colin is my first name. I was baptised Colin Patrick because the Priest didn't recognise a St Colin. He said to my godparents to find another name, and there happened to be a statue of St Patrick. I took Joseph as a confirmation name. When I entered the monastery, I had to have what they call a religious name, which was Stephen. I have always been known as Colin Stephen. I sign letters as C S, Colin Stephen. I don't use Patrick anymore. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before taking religious orders

2. I was born in Scotland, and lived in Scotland for a fair while. I was brought up as a Catholic, from birth. My family moved to England for work in 1960, when I was 14. We lived in Luton, Bedfordshire. After leaving school, I worked as an assistant purchasing manager, then a purchasing manager in England, for various companies. I had an inkling of wanting to return to Scotland and set up a taxi company in Greenock with two other men, hauling drunk people in and out of clubs. I then entered religious life when I joined the Benedictine Order, around April 1982. I know it was just as the Falklands War was starting, because the Abbot would announce which ships had been sunk, or battered, or whatever.

The Benedictine Order, St Benedict's, Fort Augustus

3. When you join the Benedictine order, you have six months as what they call a postulant. That is someone who is coming to consider the life, but not committed, at this stage, to it. You live in the community and dress partly as a monk, but not fully. You go through all of the things that they do, learning all the stuff.
4. At the end of those six months, the Abbot asked you to go back to where you came from, to make your decision about taking religious vows, away from the religious community. The idea was that it was better to make your decision away from the place. It also meant that the others of the community could decide if they wanted you back. You have to remember that a community is like a sort of family, and they wouldn't want someone who didn't fit in. If you were a right pain in the butt, you might not be wanted quite honestly. I came back, they accepted me and I was what they called, "Clothed." Which meant I got the gear, and the religious name.
5. I lived in the monastery at St Benedict's Abbey, Fort Augustus, right at the top, in what's called the Novitiate. It's about three, four, or half-a-dozen rooms, one of which is occupied by what is called the Novice Master, whose job it is to keep an eye on you and make sure you're behaving yourself. There's then twelve months as a Novice. That's you in a sense trying it out. Four times during that twelve months, they brought in the Abbott and you are asked again, "Do you want to persevere?" It's quite a solid way of making you think what you are doing there, or if you are coming in on a whim. At the end of the twelve months, I took my Simple Vows. They last for three years, at which time you can pull out at any time. Eventually, at the end of those three years, that's four and a half years in total, I took my Final Vows, which commits me for life.
6. During that four and a half years, I was not expected to be part of the school in any way, because it would interfere with my religious formation and so on. I joined the school after I was ordained, which was after another two years.

Fort Augustus Abbey School, Fort Augustus, Inverness-shire

7. Fort Augustus Abbey was established in 1874. Fort Augustus Abbey School very quickly came from that, as far as I know. The Abbey came about when Lord Lovatt was given the ground back. The ground had been taken off the Lovatts, who were pro-Jacobite, previously and become a Hanoverian fort. Eventually, the government decided that there really wasn't any need for something like that in that area in Scotland. Lord Lovatt got it back around the time of the Crimean War. The Lovatts have always been Catholic and they offered it to the Church, for anyone to come and set up here. The Benedictines decided they would take it on. At that time, they were under a man called Vaughan, whose family are well known in the church.
8. The Benedictines were keen to see initially that it was affiliated to the two Catholic houses in Europe that still had Scots in them, so there was a link to pre-reformation Scotland. Those who were there decided they didn't want to belong to the English Benedictines. Whether it was a Scottish thing or not I don't know, but they left. It looked like they would maybe set up a Scottish Benedictine Order, but that didn't work so they went back to the English Benedictines. That was probably towards the end of the 1800's. The English Benedictines had always simply returned to these islands as part of their work, running parishes if possible, because there were very few Catholic priests in the country. They looked after parishes and also educated the young. In most cases, the young would belong to the upper classes, and let's be honest, quite simply, they would be more likely to occupy positions of trust or power in the future. They had to have a school and that's where Fort Augustus Abbey School came from. Fort Augustus village is right next to Fort Augustus Abbey School. You come out of the main gates, and you're straight into the village.
9. I joined the school after I was ordained on 8 December 1988. At first, I was mainly looking after what we called the grounds of the school, which I had been doing already. As well as the grounds of the monastery, there were the playing fields. There were sorts of things that had to be got ready for matches. There were lay staff and my job involved making sure they did their jobs and things. Around 1989, I was then asked by the Abbot to become what's known as the bursar, the money man.

10. In a monastic community, the Abbot, by virtue of the very name, means Father. During my time at Fort Augustus, the Abbot was Nicholas Holman. In the English Benedictine community, the Abbot is elected by the community for a term of eight years. You can be re-elected, as far as I remember, but at the end of eight years he has to step down and they have to have an election. The Abbot, in spiritual terms, takes the place of Christ for the monk when it comes to obedience. The Abbot therefore appoints all of us to whatever it may be and he appointed me as bursar.

The staff, Fort Augustus Abbey School

11. During my time at Fort Augustus [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] were Father [REDACTED] MMF [REDACTED] Father, Father [REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED] Father [REDACTED] MEW [REDACTED] and Father [REDACTED] MER [REDACTED]
12. I recall all of the monks and lay staff, in different degrees. Other than the names I have stated, they didn't use any other names. There were nicknames though. I considered them to be fellow monks and friends. For the majority of my time at Fort Augustus Father Nicholas Holman was the Headmaster, and Father [REDACTED] MKT [REDACTED] was [REDACTED]
13. At some stage, I saw all of them with children at the school, except Father [REDACTED] MFF [REDACTED] and Father [REDACTED] MKT [REDACTED]. They were quite relaxed with the children. The only discipline of the pupils by the staff was through giving the pupils detention. I never saw any of them abusing the children in any way. I didn't hear of any allegations of abuse against them from any of the children, or anyone else.
- Father [REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED]
14. I knew Father [REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED] all of my monastic life. He was a very good teacher. He was excitable. He taught [REDACTED] then he was [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED]. He would raise his voice a lot. He would shout at people not paying attention. I never saw him use physical force for discipline, just shouting. There was no abuse. He expected people to do what

they were told. The kids were in awe of him. He was not my favourite person, I knew to be wary of him.

Father [REDACTED] MER

15. Father [REDACTED] MER was in his fifties. He was a sacristy monk. He was a Housemaster but would teach occasionally. He was an ordinary guy, but serious about what he was doing. He was an intellectual.

Father [REDACTED] MEW

16. Father [REDACTED] MEW was in his seventies. He was [REDACTED] then [REDACTED] SNR. He was also serious about the work of the school.

Father [REDACTED] MEZ

17. Father [REDACTED] MEZ was in his late seventies. He taught [REDACTED] he loved [REDACTED].

Father [REDACTED] MFA

18. Father [REDACTED] MFA was in his late seventies. He taught [REDACTED]. He was a strange man, he rarely smiled. He liked a drink.

Father [REDACTED] MFC

19. I didn't really know Father [REDACTED] MFC. He was in his late fifties. He was gone quite quickly after I arrived. He was a Housemaster, then he left to go to Canada. He seemed very self-centred.

Father [REDACTED] MFF

20. Father [REDACTED] MFF was in his seventies. He had spent most of his monastic life in the Catholic Archives, in Edinburgh. Then he was put up to Inverness to become [REDACTED] SNR

at Fort Augustus. I found Father [MFF] difficult to deal with. His was the last word. He had his own ideas of how things should be going and wanted to be in control.

Father [MKT]

21. Father [MKT] was in his seventies. He was [] and [] at the monastery. He did not teach in the school. He was quite authoritarian. He did his job and expected you to do what you were told. He was quite a serious and intellectual man.

[MIF]

22. [MIF] was in his mid-twenties. He was [] He was a young, happy guy.

[MIG]

23. [MIG] was in his early sixties. He did teach at the school, but I can't remember what he taught. He loved his garden.

[MIH]

24. [MIH] was one of the lay staff. He was in his early or mid-sixties. He also taught [] He had been a pilot in World War 2 and came out with some fantastic stories.

25. [MMF] had been [SNR] until it got to the point where they were going to close the school. It was long before it did actually close. All hell broke loose. The parents of the pupils were up in arms and started a campaign to keep the school open. It was quite something. [MMF] said, "I'm off." He left when the school closed, the first time. He was released to [] another monastic school in the United States, where he was made [SNR] That left a vacancy for [SNR] and Father [MRQ] was then [SNR] I can't remember

what date that happened. He was an excellent man, but he could fly off the handle very easily. He was not the best people person. I think Abbot Nicholas Holman realised he was fine for what he was doing, but he's no use for this job. Poor old Father MEW MEW was then given the job. By that time, MEW would be in his seventies. MEW Nicholas Holman, the Abbot, looked around to see, "Who the hell can I get to be Bursar?" and that was me.

26. My background before I entered the monastery had given me all sorts of experience. Part of the job was paying salaries to the staff and so on. I had come in what they would call "late" into the community, at the age of 35. I had qualifications, A levels, GCSE's.
27. In those days, not like today, there were plenty of jobs to go to. I worked for Britannia Airways, buying aircraft parts. I worked for Vauxhall Motors buying components for cars. I ended up in a big printing company, Waterlow & Sons, part of the British Printing Corporation, as a purchasing manager. Because of those jobs, I had a good idea of business acumen and things. I was responsible for paying everything, including the staff.
28. For my day job as Bursar, I had a monk who worked under me, Father Anthony Haine. Sadly, Father Haine died recently. Tony was one of these great people who was very meticulous, which meant he was ideal for keeping all the filing and everything else. I could scatter a desk but Tony would make sure it was all tidied. By that time, there were about 180 pupils. I think at its highest, the school had about 250 pupils. I was there as bursar for about a three-year period until I left. I think I left the school in 1992. The school closed about 1994.
29. There was a shortage of monastic personnel who were young enough to be of use at the school. More and more of the monks who had taught were no longer teaching there and had been replaced by lay teachers. There were only two, three, maybe four monks who were left physically teaching at the school. They were Father MRQ MRQ who taught MEW, Father MFA who taught MEW, Father David Ward, who taught religious studies, Father MER who taught MEW, MEW

and [REDACTED] and Father [REDACTED] MEZ [REDACTED] who taught [REDACTED]. Father [REDACTED] MMF [REDACTED] was [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] when I arrived. He [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] Father [REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED], but he did have a secretary to do some running about. At no point did I have any concerns about any of these brothers being abusive to children. I thought that some were better teachers than others, but they were all capable of doing what they did. There were a few monks who had been boys at the school and more or less stayed.

30. My relationship with Father [REDACTED] MEW [REDACTED] was up and down. We didn't always see eye-to-eye on some financial things. [REDACTED] I saw things in the records that I wasn't happy about, things like paying VAT on fuel when we shouldn't have done. I discussed these things with him. Father [REDACTED] MEW [REDACTED] left after I went to join the Navy.
31. The other members of teaching staff were all lay people. There were about fifteen teaching staff in total, between the lay and religious staff. All of the main areas of the curriculum were covered. Including languages, geography, maths and the sciences. There was also the matron, there were three ground staff and three laundry staff. There was a well-known professional company who did the catering. We got rid of them but kept the chefs.
32. As far as I remember, the staff were answerable directly to the Headmaster. If they had discipline problems at school, they would report them to the Housemasters, and if necessary, they or the Housemaster would report them to the Headmaster, if it was of a level that it needed.
33. Because of the Order's inability to find monastic staff to do things, I was asked to take over one of the two housemaster jobs at Vaughan House. There were two houses, Lovatt and Vaughan. I was asked to do that within about a year of being taken on as bursar. I wasn't employed in any sense as a teacher. Occasionally I would stand in for religious instruction if Father Ward wasn't there. Other than that, I didn't teach any other classes. It would have been a waste of time. I remained as Bursar during that

period of time. I was bursaring during the day and house-mastering in the evening and night. I would get to bed about eleven, twelve and be up again at five.

34. The housemasters were myself for Vaughan and Father [REDACTED] MER for Lovatt. Lovatt and Vaughan were the family names of the founders of the place. The pupils were divided between the two houses for sports competition and things. The pupils were not divided into junior and senior. I believe there had been a junior group, but there was no one to look after them so the groups had become mixed up. The junior group was shoved in with the senior group. The pupils in Vaughan House ranged from eleven to seventeen, eighteen.
35. Vaughan House had about fifty, sixty pupils. The other house had approximately the same. By then, the numbers had dropped down from 180. I don't remember any day pupils. They were all boarders. The pupils were all boys. The pupils started at the age of about eleven. Prior to my being at the school, they had a feeder school called Carlekemp, just outside Edinburgh. It varied of course, but if you were averaging it out, there would be about twenty pupils in each particular school year.
36. In a sense, they were all fee-paying pupils, but very few of them were paying the full amount. The fees were heading up to about £9000 a year when I was bursar. The majority were on a government-subsidised scheme called the Assisted Places Scheme. That was probably taking about two-thirds of the pupils. Most of the children were from the central belt of Scotland. Most of the children were from families who had attended the school for two or three generations. There is an old boys' organisation and they still meet. [REDACTED]. My impression of the school was that it was a busy, happy place, full of screaming kids, but funny. I didn't have a negative feeling whilst there.
37. My role as housemaster was pastoral, basically to make sure that the kids were okay. If they had problems, I would make sure I could talk to them about it. I had a monastic room as a monk. As housemaster, I had what you might call a flat within the school. It had a lounge area with a television in it, a desk and basic furniture for the kids. There was a kitchen, so the kids could do all the things they like to do, make toasties and

popcorn or whatever. I slept in there when I was on duty. They knew I would be there if they needed me. I was on duty every other night. When I was on duty, I was looking after Vaughan and Lovatt, likewise the housemaster for Lovatt when it was his turn.

Routine at Fort Augustus Abbey School

First day

38. You approached the front of the complex, which is the monastery and the school, and then went through a little corridor. It was originally designed and built for the poor to sit and knock on the door and they would be given food. As you went through the doors, the headmaster's office was on the left hand side. On the right hand side was the bursar's office. The boarding accommodation was above those. There were very few staff who lived on site.
39. When a pupil, particularly a younger pupil, came to the school, we found it best to ensure that there was a monitor to show the new boy where all the bits and pieces were. The monitor would show new pupils where they took their laundry, where matron lived, where the housemasters' rooms were and how to get from point A to point B. Each housemaster would then see the kids and basically try to make them feel comfortable. There were those that took to it like a duck to water and there were those who found it hard to handle.
40. If a boy was finding it hard, for example if he was homesick, I would keep an extra eye on him. The arrangement was that the door to the housemaster's room was not to be locked. That way, they could find you or just sit down if necessary. However, they were not to miss out on lessons without someone knowing.
41. Most of the pupils were Scottish. Occasionally we would get kids from Mexico, if their parents wanted them to learn English. I remember two siblings coming up the drive, coming back from hockey or whatever. I said to them, "Did you enjoy that?" They said,

“Aye, it was no bad.” Their parents had sent them to learn English and they picked up Glaswegian.

42. Prior to my time, you would have had a lot of military people, who paid for their children to go to boarding school because they would be spending time in India or wherever it was. That eventually just disappeared. All that really supported the place in my time was the Assisted Places Scheme. Most of the children were with us throughout their schooling.

Mornings and bedtime

43. My accommodation was close to some of the pupils’ rooms. The pupils were in individual rooms with bunk beds, two or three to a room. The only pupils who had single accommodation were the prefects. There had been a large dormitory in the attic space. There was an area that was known as the hospice, a specific word in a monastic set up. One of the things monks are supposed to do is to provide accommodation for anyone who needs it. That’s what the hospice was for. That was refurbished and turned into accommodation for the boys and the big dormitory was closed.
44. It was my duty in the morning to wake the boys. I would get up at 5.00 am and go to Matins at 6.00 am. I would then head up to the top floor, where the prefects were, at about 6.50 am and knock on all their doors. I would wander round, knocking on the room doors, and the prefects would follow me. The accommodation was over about three floors. I would go back to my housemaster’s room, leave it for ten, fifteen minutes and then repeat the process, just to make sure they were all up.
45. There were two or three boys to each room. We would group boys according to their age, keeping the younger ones together. It worked very well. I used to smile, if that’s the right way to put it. I would be up at 5.00, be in the church by 5.40. We had in the monastery what we called, “The great silence.” That is, no talking. We got to church and the first words we heard were what we called, “The office.” We’d start saying psalms. I would then come then over to the school. It was quiet as hell, not a thing. I

got up the stairs and I'd wake the prefects and start my way down. I would give it three or four minutes. By the time the first tranny would come on, the whole total silence would become a background noise of kids switching on and singing, shouting and yelling or whatever. They got up at the same time on Saturdays. They weren't allowed a long lie.

46. The youngest boys started going to their beds at 9.00 pm and the others went gradually, but it wasn't set. At 9.00 pm we would get them in. The housemaster and the prefects would make rounds, making sure everyone was back in.
47. If there was a problem with a boy at night, a prefect would bring him to the housemaster's room. I remember there was one first year boy who came to me. He was in his dressing gown and said, "My mummy used to give me a hug. Can I have a hug?" I gave him a hug and off he went, happy as Larry. That only happened once.

Mealtimes/Food

48. There was a professional chef at Fort Augustus. There was what you would call a refectory, where all the pupils ate, at the same time. Breakfast was roughly 8.30 am, lunch was 1.00 pm, and supper at 5.00 or 6.00 pm, I can't remember. If I was the duty person, I would be sitting in, eating my meals with the pupils. Some of the other members of staff would have lunch, but most would have gone by the evening. There were about two members of staff who stayed at the school during the period that I was there. One was a French teacher and I can't think who the other one was. The headmaster stayed at the school as well, he was a monk. The idea was to make all main positions monastic. That was the idea, but they didn't have them.
49. The pupils would come in the door of the refectory, up to the serving area with a tray. They had a choice of cereals, toast, tea, coffee, and orange for breakfast. They all sat down and said grace. We had an excellent lunch, I can assure you. It was a proper company they had in there with a professional chef. It was a sit down lunch and the same for supper. There would be two or three courses at lunch and supper. When we had what they called a feast day, such as the feast of St. Benedict, the pupils had

exactly the same as the community, which may be four or five courses. They would go to church and come back, ready for their meal. Those would be on weekdays, mostly.

50. The food would be the same at the weekend. We always had a roast at Sunday lunchtime.

Washing/bathing

51. There were communal toilets. There were two or three baths and so on, then down in the basement were the showers for whenever the pupils came back from games. Bathing and washing was not supervised, it was up to boys themselves. The games masters would be around after games, making sure they all went to the showers and had brought all their gear back in clean before they took it back. [REDACTED] MIF [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] MIH [REDACTED] were the [REDACTED] when I was there. [REDACTED] MIH [REDACTED] was an older gentleman. From what I remember, it seemed to all work.

52. Each year had a day for laundry. Under supervision, it was taken down to the in-house laundry. They didn't have to do their own laundry. Part of the agreement was they had to make sure all their gear had their names on it. They would go down to the laundry on three different days.

Clothing/uniform

53. Pupils were expected to wear their uniforms during the week and at weekends. The monastic staff wore a black habit, the exception being Father [REDACTED] MRQ [REDACTED] if he was doing something of a [REDACTED] nature. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The pupils wore red blazers at weekends and for religious feasts. They had to wear those in town, as they weren't allowed to be incognito. They had what you would call a brogue type of jacket for during the week. They were expensive though. In those days, it was over £100 for a jacket. Every year, there would be X number of them left behind. We used to try to get rid of them to the new kids coming in.

54. The pupils wore their civilian clothes when they arrived and when they were leaving to go home. There were some who wore jeans in the evening but this was not encouraged. One of the functions of the uniform was that you could identify a pupil in the village who shouldn't be there.

Personal possessions

55. The pupils kept their personal possessions in their rooms. They each had a bedside table, drawers to keep their bits and bobs in, and a wardrobe for hanging their clothes in. If there was something expensive, we could lock it up for them.

School

56. Father [REDACTED] MEZ taught [REDACTED] he was a fantastic [REDACTED]. He was going deaf at the time, which was a shame. He was also supposed to teach Gregorian chanting at the monastery. Within five minutes, you could get him to go from Gregorian chanting to playing, Down at the old Bull and Bush, and having a singsong round the piano.
57. Father [REDACTED] MRQ taught [REDACTED] and Father David Ward taught religion. I wouldn't have liked to have been taught by David because he was very full of himself. Father [REDACTED] MFA taught [REDACTED] Father [REDACTED] MER taught [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] He had quite a mind. He is dead now. Some of them were better teachers than others but they were all capable and competent at what they did.
58. School started at 9.00 am. There was a mid-morning break, but I don't know when it was. I think it was about the back of 10.00 am. Lunch was 12.30 or 1.00 pm. After lunch had finished, it was games every afternoon. They didn't have lessons immediately after lunch. They had games, which if I remember rightly, started about 2.00 pm. They would play hockey or rugby, which were the two main things. They would come in for afternoon tea about 3.30 pm. School would then start again at 4.00 pm until about 5.00 or 5.30 pm. After school, they would go and have their meal. By 7.00 pm, they would have to be in the study hall for about an hour of prep. All the

pupils would sit in the study hall together. They were supervised. If anyone really got out of hand, they were sent to their Housemaster.

59. At the weekend, they didn't have to do the same amount of prep compared to what they did during the week. They could ask to do it if they felt it was getting near exam times. It was always interesting whenever it got nearer to exam times, as there was a marked increase in the number of them going to church.
60. We had prize-giving at the end of the year. Parents would come to that and take the boys out for lunch. We did GCSEs, Highers and A Levels at the school. They were taken very seriously and exam papers would be kept almost under guard.

Leisure time

61. Each of the years could go to their housemaster's room one night per week after study, according to age. They could make toast and watch television, have popcorn, toasties, you name it. They had a specific night depending if they were first year, second year, third year, and so on. If they weren't in their housemaster's room, they would just be amongst their mates, playing around or playing football. If it was dark, they would get up to whatever they would get up to, within reason. They were allowed in the grounds in the winter months as well as the summer.
62. The regime was such that it felt like the kids were pretty well occupied. There was no school on a Saturday. Sometimes, they might be away on a games trip in the afternoon. They would play Gordonstoun or Strathallan or they might be coming to play against us. I remember one occasion when I think Prince Andrew was on the Gordonstoun team. You know what kids are like, they had him marked. I had to occasionally go out to make sure the marking was fun and not anything else.
63. On Saturday and Sunday evenings, they could come up to the housemaster's room. I didn't mind and neither did the others. I let them watch videos, but you had to make sure you knew what videos they were watching. They could use the kitchen if they wanted to. It was a very relaxed weekend. Unfortunately, I always had work to do. I

would come in and sit down, correcting stuff or whatever. If kids wanted to see you, they would say, "Can I have a word, Father?" I would say, "Yeah, no problem." I would then take them into the kitchen with the others out.

64. There may have been an occasional film shown, but nothing sticks in my mind. It was the age of the video and they watched. There was a big hall with a stage in it. They held assemblies for specific reasons. I don't remember an assembly every day. The headmaster would address the school, if he had to.
65. On Saturday mornings, in the early part, the pupils could go to their Housemaster to draw their pocket money. Pocket money was handed in at the beginning of the term, under their names. You would be there, dishing it out, and making sure they didn't draw too much. They could ask for five shillings or something like that. They were limited in what they could spend, as Fort Augustus is a small place. It's at its busiest during the summer when the pupils weren't there, because they were on holiday.
66. Pupils were allowed into town at Fort Augustus on Saturday, with strict instructions not to get up to anything because we would know immediately. They were not allowed to go further without permission. Depending on the time of year, they could go into the town during the week between supper and 7.00 pm. There was a rivalry between the town boys and the Abbey boys. That's the way you get these things, so we had to be careful. The local sergeant of police was a great guy. He would keep us informed of anyone we had to keep an eye on. I can't remember his name.
67. After Mass on a Sunday, they were basically in uniform again. They would wear their red blazers with a black corbie and then they would go in to lunch. In the afternoon in, it would be just what the afternoon took. Sometimes they might be up in the housemaster's again, watching videos or whatever. It was very relaxed but the basic format of time remained.
68. I don't remember finding anyone bored, if you know what I mean. They had their own bits and pieces with them, the usual, I'm sure they had a common room. The common room was for all of them. They could spend time in their own rooms. There was a

library, if they were studious or up to something. There were two large billiard tables, which could be used under supervision. Otherwise somebody would rip them up, not necessarily out of malice but just because things like that happen.

69. They were allowed to go out into the grounds, although the monastic area was completely excluded, under supervision. They had canoes, a very large naval gig that they used a lot. There was an outdoor swimming pool, which was freezing cold in summer, as it was filled from Loch Ness. But it didn't stop them. They jumped in with smiles on their faces. I used to shudder and they'd still be smiling. We, as a community, kept the local fire engine. It was one of these volunteer situations. If there was an emergency, they would call the monastery, and set off the alarm, the siren. Some of the villagers were part of it and some of the monks were part of it. They used the pump to fill the pool.
70. They had two sections of the Combined Cadet Force, naval and the army. They met once a week, in the afternoon. I think it was on a Thursday. They were quite good at it. There was one monk, Father [REDACTED] MFG [REDACTED] who was [REDACTED] He died about six months after I arrived and there was no one to replace him. The army then took over.
71. They didn't have Scouts at Fort Augustus, just the Combined Cadet Force. Sometimes the lay staff would occasionally teach the kids modelling or bits and pieces.

Religious instruction

72. The religious aspect started in the morning with prayers in the study hall. It would be either myself or one of the prefects who did that. We also said grace before every meal.
73. There was religious education for pupils in each year. There were one or two of the monks who took those classes. It was part of the daily curriculum.

74. During the week, the pupils two choices. They could go either go along to church for the first Mass, which was at 7.40 am or, if they didn't go, they could go along to what is known as the study hall. You either went to the study hall, to study under the supervision of the prefects, or you went to Mass. Then they would have breakfast.
75. At the weekend, Mass was obligatory. They had to be at Mass on Sunday morning. It was from either 9.00 or 9.30 am. The boys would be involved in altar serving at Mass. That was mostly on Sunday or a Feast Day. Members of the public could go to Mass if they wanted to, but the first Mass was mainly the boys from the school. There was another Mass for the parish at 11.00 am.
76. There wasn't any misbehaviour by the boys in church. The prefects would always sit in the back row of the congregation, keeping an eye on things. Basically, the kids wouldn't do misbehave because they knew they would be out of line.
77. I remember a teacher sent a child to me for doing something in the classroom. The teacher said, "I told that him he would be punished by being sent to Mass. I said, "You bloody told him wrong. I don't see Mass as a punishment, if you don't mind. I don't want boys growing up thinking something was wrong which aren't, it mustn't happen. Go back and tell him you were wrong." That would be not only degrading but in excess of decency, in any sense, to do that to a child.
78. I am not aware of any of the pupils from my time there following a religious career.

Trips/Holidays

79. On Saturdays, the boys might be away playing games against another school, like Gordonstoun, or they might come to us. Most of the trips were of a sports nature. The school organised them. They got on a coach, and off they went. I can't remember any cultural trips. I can't remember any trips that weren't sports related.
80. The boys didn't have any mini-holidays with us. We just had the usual term. When the holidays came, we didn't have any boys staying behind. At the end of term, boys would

either be collected by their parents or get a coach to Spean Bridge, where they would get the train to Glasgow.

Birthdays and Christmas

81. Birthdays were celebrated if a pupil wanted them to be. We didn't go through a list and say, "It's so and so's birthday." Their parents might send up a cake and when it was that pupil's night for fun at my room, we would carry it in and sing happy birthday.

Visits/Inspections

82. It would be unusual for parents to visit, other than the beginning and end of term. I presume they could visit during term time, I'm not aware of any rule saying they couldn't. If they wanted to come and take a boy away for the weekend, they would need an Exact, which is written permission from the Headmaster.
83. Pupils could phone their parents. There was a pay phone they could put money into. Some pupils had mobile phones, but there weren't many, thank God. Pupils could telephone home and parents could phone the school. When parents telephoned during the day, we would arrange a specific time for them to phone back and speak to the pupil, unless it was a matter of life and death.
84. I don't know about any education organisation inspections. There were no deaths when I was at the school. There is one boy who is buried in the monastic cemetery. He died in the 1920's or something like that.
85. There was no board of governors for the school, as the Abbot took on that role. A board of governors wouldn't fit in with the monastic idea. Recently, some of the monastic houses that have schools have changed, with the monastic side giving up their governance to a lay body. I am not aware of the school taking any external advice about management of the school, except the Combined Cadet Force. The Abbot would seek financial advice from a company of accountants called Dunn. He certainly knew a few old boys that he would speak to.

Healthcare

86. There was one matron for the school. If a pupil was unwell, he would have to go and see matron. She would decide whether he could be looked after in school or whether she would call a doctor. They would find somewhere in the accommodation for them to be on their own, but supervised. If the boy needed to see a doctor, that would be through the matron as well. She would contact the local doctor. The doctor's name was Willie-John, but I can't remember if his surname was McDonald. He had a Highland surname. He would come in from time to time, to chat and say, "How's things?" He would come in if he was called. Once a year he gave the flu jab to pupils and staff. They would have to queue up. The doctor was a G.P. in Fort Augustus. If the children needed to go to hospital, I assume it would be Raigmore Hospital in Inverness. I am not aware of there being any dental treatment.
87. Matron didn't live in the school. She lived in the village, but she could be called if necessary. She didn't have staff working for her, but she had access to the staff, if she needed them.

Bed Wetting

88. The Matron dealt with a few cases where they found the bed was wet the next day, but that is to be expected. She would have spoken to the child, to try to see what was on his mind. I am not aware of any disciplinary action being taken over the issue of bed wetting, certainly not by me. They weren't made an example of. Any aggro a child got would have been from his mates. We would try to get their sheets taken to the laundry, separate from other bedclothes. There was nothing that might be described as a "Walk of shame" at Fort Augustus.

Discipline

89. There wasn't a written code or policy about discipline. It was left to each individual teacher. If there was a discipline problem with a pupil at the school, it would be

reported to the Housemaster. When I started at the school, corporal punishment was still legal and the tawse belt was used. Its use had to be entered into a register. After European Union law prohibited corporal punishment in schools, boys were made to spend extra time in the study hall or were given detention or lines as punishment. They might have been restricted from doing things they wanted to do. Detentions did not have to be recorded anywhere. I never actually saw the discipline register. Although we had grounds staff, the task of cleaning the grounds of rubbish could be used as a form of detention.

90. The kind of things a pupil would be punished for included failing to attend classes, the study hall or Mass or being caught smoking. A serious breach of discipline would be something like a punch-up between pupils, running away or stealing, but I can't recall any occurrences of theft or running away. If a pupil was screaming and shouting about something, I would just let them scream and shout until they had finished. I don't remember any problems regarding drinking, cigarettes, or drugs. I can't remember any expulsions during my time at the school.
91. I can recall some kids having a flare up, usually because of something happening at home. I couldn't say that there was no bullying at the school, but I didn't see any if there was. If I had seen it, I would have put a stop to it.
92. The discipline I used was either verbal chastisement or detention in the study hall. Lines were a pain for everybody, to be honest with you. I can't recall any specific instances, but if there was something really serious it would be reported to the Headmaster. I didn't report anyone to the Headmaster.
93. The system was that the prefects were used as the foot soldiers, so to speak, to keep an eye on things. There were about twelve prefects altogether. If you weren't there yourself, you made sure someone was going to be there. If there was a problem with a boy at night, a prefect would take him to his housemaster.
94. The prefects were part of the governing body of the school. They had a degree of autonomy. They were entitled to give out detention, but they were not allowed to give

any physical chastisement. They would have to tell you if they had given out detention. During my time at the school, I did not have any concern about any underlying difficulty with the operation of the prefects system. I didn't have any concerns about any member of staff. My only concerns were about how the school could continue financially.

95. It was the responsibility of all of us to supervise the children. If they were out and about in the village, you would make sure they were all back safely and that no one was missing. It was very efficient. The prefects played a part in what you would call the administrative body, the governing body. They accepted that as part of their position as a prefect.
96. I did see other staff disciplining pupils. They would shout at them if they failed to bring the right kit for games. I can't recall anyone ever striking a pupil, not even cuffing the back of their head. I never saw anyone being physical towards a pupil. I never saw any pupil with unusual or unexplained injuries. The only injuries were from the hockey pitch or the rugby field. I don't recall any child having to go to hospital for an unusual injury.
97. I never received any report, from pupils or staff, suggesting any physical assault or abuse. If I had received such a report, I would have reported the matter to the headmaster. I don't know if the headmaster received any reports of assault from any other members of staff. If he did, they were not discussed with me, as the headmaster did not take me into his confidence. He may have discussed it with Father MRQ who had been at the school a long time. He may even have been a boy at the school.
98. I can't recall any instance, either at the time or with the benefit of hindsight, of a boy who was normally outgoing suddenly becoming withdrawn. I can remember a boy becoming quieter on one occasion. When one got talking to him, it was because he felt he wasn't wanted at home. His father had remarried and he had been told that he wasn't coming home for mid-term and things like that. That is devastating to a child. I phoned his father about it and told him this was not an acceptable way to treat his child. He said didn't know about it and that it must have been his wife who did that. I

told him to sort it out. The boy went home. I would have taken him home myself. The dad was hurting someone in a way that he had no right to do.

99. I can recall one boy who got involved with a girl from the village and she fell pregnant. After the boy left school, he still wanted to come back to the school and visit his old classmates. I refused him permission, even to watch the sports, because of the moral position he had put himself in. I couldn't let the others think he could do this and just get away with it.
100. In the end I had to go down to the House of Lords for him. It was for a paternity suit, to fight for the father's rights to be the same as the mother's. I went along to give evidence in the House of Lords. I knew his parents. I was a witness to say what had happened. I was a witness to his character and events. I knew what he'd done and he knew what he'd done was wrong. You can't undo a wrong in that sense but you can do your best to try and see that justice is done. He had battled this thing on his own for years. He got it as far as he could and then I said I would come with him. He did not succeed in his action.

Abuse at Fort Augustus Abbey School

101. If I had seen any abuse, I would tell you. I recall that a pupil reported seeing two people in a car at the front of the school, in some kind of sexual embrace. I can't remember who reported it. We reported it to the police. They went and had a look but couldn't see anyone. It would have been two people unconnected with the school. Presumably, they realised they had been seen, because by the time I had spoken to the police, they had just driven away.
102. I cannot ever remember any child coming to me to complain about any member of staff for any reason. The only injuries among children at the school I ever saw were from the rugby or hockey pitches.

103. If a child had made a report of abuse to me, I would have wanted to know if they had any proof of the matter. However, even if they had no proof, I would have taken the matter to the headmaster and I would have followed it up too.
104. If I had received a report regarding a monastic member of staff, I would have probably mentioned it to the Abbot as well, but I never had any adverse feeling about any member of staff, nothing of that nature. I didn't have to go to the headmaster for any matter relating to the children. I am not aware of any record of such reports to the headmaster. I only had to go to the headmaster for financial matters.
105. There was one occasion, in 1991 or 1992, when two detectives from Inverness police came to the school. They said that they had received an allegation against a monk, Father [REDACTED] MFA. I don't know what the full allegation was and I wasn't told. I don't remember much of the content of it. I was asked to sit in with Father [REDACTED] MER whilst he saw the detectives, as the boy making the allegation was in Father [REDACTED] MER house. The police wanted permission to speak to some of the boys, as oppose to all of the boys, and that permission was granted. I had the impression they wanted to speak to this [REDACTED] friends, who would either be supporting him or not, Permission was granted, but I don't know what happened after that, as I was only asked to sit in when the police spoke with Father [REDACTED] MER. I was only involved for about ten minutes in total. What I can say is there was no feedback from that, at least not to me. You would have thought there would be some sort of feedback somewhere in the system.
106. Father [REDACTED] MFA never seemed happy. His nickname was [REDACTED] MFA. However, I am not aware of him ever being abusive towards any of the children.
107. Later, I gave a statement to the police. That was on 3 March 2014. It related to an allegation by a pupil named [REDACTED] against another monk. I gave this statement in [REDACTED] to the local police, who were acting on behalf of the police in Scotland. They asked me questions, but not as many questions as the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry have. They sent me a copy of the statement to check and sign, which I did. I re-read that statement on 25 April 2019 and there is nothing that I would change about the statement I gave.

108. I remember [REDACTED] he was fourteen or fifteen when I was at Fort Augustus. He was not in my house. [REDACTED] was a loner. He was not a bad kid. He could magnify stories as much as any kid. He wanted to be accepted. The other kids were always having a go at [REDACTED], because he was always lying or magnifying stories. I think [REDACTED] left about a year before I did. [REDACTED] had made a complaint against Father [REDACTED] MFA [REDACTED] I think [REDACTED] said at one point that he and another boy had been handcuffed underneath the stage. I didn't know anything about that. The stage was very low and you couldn't have stood up underneath the stage. I understand he said that I was kind to him.
109. Towards the final years of the school, we took in some pupils that we might not usually have taken in. Those pupils had disturbed backgrounds and no one else would take them. They would usually be fourteen or fifteen. They settled in all right.
110. From a child protection point of view, there was no one outside of the school that was up on the notice board as being someone people could speak to. There was no specific list of which member of staff a pupil could speak to about child protection. The children could have spoken to any member of staff. If there had been anything of that nature reported to me, which there wasn't, I would have taken it straight to the headmaster.
111. There were no instances of staff leaving suddenly or without explanation. There were some who came and went during that period, but nobody who was suddenly gone when you woke up in the morning. There was none of that at all. I didn't have a lot to do with the staff, but my impression of them was that they were a pretty decent sort of crowd. They were just ordinary people.
112. I wasn't made aware of any anecdotes or descriptions of any allegations against any former members of staff. I have heard very little about three Australian Brothers, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] I heard that they had belonged to the Community, but they had returned to Australia. This was before I arrived and joined the Community. I remember asking why they were going back to Australia but I was just told they had come from a monastery over there and were going back. I was told

that [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED] was a fantastic [REDACTED]. At the time, I didn't know anything about the allegations which he is now facing.

113. I think if we were dealing now with issues relating to abusive behaviour, given cultural change and things, we would have probably come at some of these things differently. If there was any allegation, we would be much more careful to have things written down, to have proof of things, because anyone can say anything without some form of proof. If there had been a Deputy Headmaster, they could have taken on some things.
114. I see other former staff from the school occasionally, maybe once a year, just when I have been up in Scotland. They are in a state of shock about allegations of abuse. They're saying, "When? We didn't know about it."
115. There was no written child protection policy when I was at the school. When I was bursar and housemaster, I don't think we were doing anything, or lacking anything in a sense, that would have led to things being hidden or not known or not found out. Would we have done things differently? Most certainly. As you know, we now have a strict code of practice with regard to safeguarding and you can't step outside those, under any circumstances, or you are right in the proverbial poo.

Leaving Fort Augustus Abbey School

116. Fort Augustus Abbey School closed in 1994, but I had left in 1992. I left to join the Navy as a chaplain. The school was still going at that time, but there were all the signs that it was going to close. I had been the bursar. The numbers were dropping and it hadn't really paid its way for fifty years. The community had investments, and the profits from the investments went to subsidise the school. Even then, it was getting to the point where you just couldn't continue.
117. I asked permission from the Abbot, who grudgingly allowed me to go through the process of getting into the Navy. The Abbot didn't want me to go but I said, "I'm going."

I was being very disobedient at the time. I could see the writing on the wall, that the school was going to be coming to an end. I was prepared to hang on at the school, but the community was getting older and I just felt that I would be better serving in something like the forces. There was another Benedictine monk from Appleforth, who was stationed at one of the air bases near Moray. He used to come down occasionally and he said, "Why don't you join the forces, Stephen?" Eventually I did.

118. I took three years of exclaustation, which means I was outside the Order for a period of three years. I was under another Superior, the Bishop of the Forces. I was a chaplain in the Navy. I was based in various places. I did my basic training in Plymouth, which nearly killed me. I was in Plymouth for two years after that, then I spent most of the time at sea. My postal address was Portsmouth. I was in the Navy for four-and-a-half years in total. Initially, it was what is called a short-term commission and then my Abbot insisted that I return. I thought I'd better be obedient, but eventually I realised that was a mistake. That was around 1998.

Life after Fort Augustus Abbey School

119. When I came back from Portsmouth, when I came out of the Royal Navy, I saw a various things. One such thing was that SNR MFF didn't really have any specific job for me to do. I got involved in all sorts of stuff which I wasn't particularly interested in. I always had a keen eye on money. I managed to see the accounts and they were in a bad way. I said to SNR MFF "You're in shit Father. Certain things have got to be done, otherwise you're going to go bankrupt." He wouldn't listen to me and, in fact, he threw me out of the office. But I was elected to what is called the monastic council, which is a governing body within the community.
120. I said to SNR MFF "You are going to have to call an extraordinary meeting. That's what it says in the constitutions, because of grave importance, and this is grave." I said I would write to Abbot President Rossiter and say to him that SNR MFF MFF wasn't doing what he was supposed to do, and something had to be done about it. Abbot President Rossiter was based in Ealing. I said I would give SNR MFF

MFF a copy of the letter. SNR MFF said, "Please yourself." I wrote the letter. My letter to Abbot President Rossiter contained my complaint of SNR MFF MFF acting against the constitutions by not calling a Monastic Council meeting. I do not have a copy of the letter. SNR MFF was then called to see Abbot President Rossiter. To cut a long story short, SNR MFF resigned.

121. The resignation of SNR MFF meant there was no SNR for the monastery and that caused Abbot President Rossiter to decide to put in an administrator for the monastery until they decided what they were going to do, or not do. The school was not put into administration at that time. At that point I decided enough was enough and I decided I was leaving. I got a lot of earache about that, but I said, "I'm still going." Since I had spent a lot of time down in the West Country, I got in touch with the Bishop of Plymouth, Chris Budd. I said I was interested, and he was happy to have me. Eventually, I was Incardinated, which means Rome dispensed me of my vows as a Benedictine, and allowed me to live in a parish, as a priest. That was in February 1998.
122. In February 1998, I wrote to the Bishop of Plymouth asking to be taken in as a Priest in his diocese, the Plymouth Diocese. The Plymouth Diocese is one of the largest in the country. It covers Cornwall, Devon, and Dorset, so it is a lot of territory. I have been in parishes in Poole. I was then sent to Cornwall, to a place called Newquay. Newquay was hell. There was a lot of drunks. I was there for five years. Then I got moved to Weymouth, I have been there for twelve years. Initially, I was given a poisoned chalice here, as I often am. I have had to close two churches and consolidate three. A lot of feeling goes into those things, but we managed. I have had the church refurbished and, on the whole, people are at peace.
123. I didn't really keep in touch with pupils after leaving Fort Augustus, but they have been in touch with me. I don't want it to seem as if I am avoiding the place, but it was part of my life that had closed. I am one for moving on. I don't have any unhappy memories of the place. There were a few occasions, especially in my early years, when I wondered what I was doing, "Should I stay, or shouldn't I stay?" That is part of the process of discernment and whatever else. But my years in the monastery were good years. They have stood me well throughout my life. The school was there, but I never

joined that particular community because they had a school. I had enough of school when I was in it. I was asked and told to join the school. I remember the story of one of the community, I can't remember who it was, being asked to go into the school and teach. He said, "But Father Abbot, I don't know anything about it." The Abbot replied, "There's a library, go and swat up." That's okay, but it isn't okay. The good Lord, in certain cases, infuses what you need to do things, but in most cases, you have to work at it to find the answers.

Allegations of abuse, Fort Augustus Abbey School

124. I first became aware about allegations of abuse at Fort Augustus over six years ago. There was a newspaper article that was pointed out to me by a friend who is now dead. No specific allegations were mentioned in the article. When the allegations first came to light, I got a phone call from Police Scotland wanting to take a witness statement. I wasn't sure which planet I was on, to be honest. None of this makes any sense to me. That was about six years ago, and I have heard nothing since then. I am privy to all the stuff that came out in the press, just the general allegations, nothing specific, apart from the man who made the television programme. That television programme was extremely one-sided, biased, and based on the one person featured in the programme, I can't remember his name, for whom they still haven't provided proof or whatever.
125. The poor old Abbey and the school got a lot of stuff thrown at it that it really didn't deserve. I'm not saying the school was perfect because what is? But I don't remember any of the things that constitute the allegations of abuse, and I'm not someone who lives in cuckoo land or walks around with my eyes or ears shut. It just doesn't make sense to me at all. Hence, my main purpose in any of this now is to try and make sure that what I know to be the truth, which is limited of course, is also recorded.
126. We live in a very strange world, particularly in our present age. Just putting your head above the parapet at all can leave you in all sorts of things. But there are times when you have to put your head above the parapet and I would be prepared to give evidence and answer anything that was asked of me. I'm not perfect. I can't say I remember

everything, but I'm pretty sure I would have known something if there had been anything that could be construed as abuse, or even heavy bullying, or anything like that. It was a small group of people. In my time, there were 140, 150 kids and fifteen staff in the community itself. When I joined the monastic community, there were thirty-odd there. By the time I left, it was down to about eight. They just died off, due to age.

127. You can't keep an awful lot of things buried that somebody doesn't know something about or hear about. As for the stuff that all the allegations of abuse are about, it was prior to me ever being there, so I've no idea. I know of the three Australian Brothers, I heard their names mentioned. All three of them were at Fort Augustus before my time there. The only thing I heard about [REDACTED] MEV [REDACTED], the one they are trying to get back from Australia, was that he had a great record, and was a fantastic [REDACTED]. Other than that, I don't know anything about him at all. He wasn't there when I was there at all.
128. I feel really proud of the work done at Fort Augustus Abbey School. I have nothing but fond memories of the place and I have found it very upsetting to hear all of the allegations that are now being made. I don't know what to make of them as I didn't see anything like that when I was there.
129. I feel as if the allegations being made are completely over-shadowing the good work and achievements that were made. There were some amazing people there over the years. The first Gaelic dictionary was produced by a monk of Fort Augustus, and he was Russian. In one of his very first actions, the first Abbot of Fort Augustus provided clothing for all the children of a village as a gesture of friendliness at Christmas time. At one time, they also had their own bakery. They had electricity before Queen Victoria had it. It was supplied by a hydroelectric generator and they made their own turbos. The Abbey even supplied electricity to the village. At Vespers, the evening prayer, they would put the big organ on, and all the lights in the village dimmed. That was all before my time.

130. Even when I was there, we must have hired two thirds of the village in one way or another. It was a large provider of income to that area. It was a very important place in its own right.
131. In 1990, some of the pupils rowed a boat the length of Loch Ness, 22 miles, to raise money for handicapped children so they could go on a pilgrimage to Lourdes. It was an old gig from the 1800's, part of the Combined Cadet Forces equipment. There must have been about eighteen of those kids, all from about fifth or sixth year. We all cheered them. The parents and everyone got involved and they raised a fair sum. It was a hard row. We had boats out to keep an eye on them. They were so chuffed. The pupils organised this themselves and I was very proud of them. I hope that some of these positive things can be highlighted and remembered by people.
132. I was ordained as a Priest in 1988, in the Abbey church. The Bishop of Argyll came down and did it. When the ordination was finished, all the kids were in the church in their red blazers. The kids sang and they raised the roof off the place. I went down as a new priest to give Communion and I don't know how I got through it. Even today, I couldn't keep the tears away. The beauty of it. They were all smiles and it was lovely, absolutely beautiful. Those are the memories I have of that school and the monastery, and they far exceed anything else that I know of.

Records

133. I didn't keep any notes or records of my own after I left the school, I'm not even sure who took over from me as Bursar. There wasn't really anybody to take over from me as housemaster, because numbers had dropped quite dramatically, I think Father MER ended up having to [REDACTED] I just left everything in the housemaster's room, as you would. I didn't keep any diaries, I'm not a diary person. I didn't keep notes, I had no reason to. I don't have photographs either. The school did take some photographs, house photos, class photos and winning teams, but I didn't keep any mementos or souvenirs. It was part of my life that had closed, and I'm one for moving on.

Impact

134. My overall experience of working at the school was good. It's all changed into flats now. One of my jobs as bursar was to look at how much it would cost to refurbish and put the plant back into good working order. Bear in mind we are talking twenty odd years ago, I came up with a figure then of £2.5 to £3 million, which was a lot of money. I went to see the Abbot and I said to him, "it seems to me, Father, as if we have to ask ourselves the question, could we raise that sort of money, and if so where?" Second, "If we did raise it, should we spend that sort of money, on a group of our size and the ages of us, would it be a good investment? Would it not be better to move the group to the central belt, say, and rebuild something that suits us?" He said, "Not to worry, God will provide." I said, "He has provided you and he has provided me, but we haven't made the answer yet, have we?" He put me out. His was not a vision of almighty God that I shared. Belief in a general sense, yes, but not on the basis of you just sit back and waiting for him to dish it up for you, you bloody well get on and do the task you have been given. You seek his help through prayer and everything else, but you get on and do the job. That's what you are there for.


Lessons to be learned

135. We have to be very careful we don't use judgements based on current procedure for something that was totally different fifty years ago. When I went to school it was not unusual to get thumped on the head, smacked with a ruler or blackboard rubbers being chucked. I'm not saying it was right but that is what happened. You wouldn't do it today. You wouldn't dare for obvious reasons. I am always a bit wary that when making judgements, people are making them in the proper sense. Most of the guys who were named by the police are all dead, they can't defend themselves now. That annoys me a little. I didn't know them all as well as others, but they were pretty decent men. They were good monks who took their vows seriously.

136. Father MEW was about 98 when he died. Towards the end of his life, he was in Ampleforth monastery in Yorkshire. I was down there visiting somebody and I saw him. In some senses he hadn't changed. He was still using his computer. When I saw him, he was helping an old person along the corridor. He died shortly after, but he said to me, "I don't want to live anymore Stephen, especially with these things they are saying, it's so unfair." I believe him, but what can we say? What can we do? We have to take things, hopefully for the right reasons, to their end and see what happens.

Other information

137. 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 *4th August 2019*.....