Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

MGU

Support person present: No

1. My name is MGU. My date of birth is 1959. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before boarding school

- I was born in Glasgow and brought up for the first few years in the Dennistoun area of Glasgow in a tenement. My mum and dad, had one other child, who is two years older than me. Our grandparents or some other relatives lived with us. We moved address to the Burnside area when I was about five. I had a good childhood and it was an exciting place to live. I played football in the streets and had fond memories of my early years. Both my parents have since passed away.
- 3. After we moved I started at a Catholic school, St Mark's primary and I didn't enjoy it. I found it quite traumatic. It all started to become a bit sectarian with different coloured blazers. I met lots of children from different social classes. I visited other children's houses. Some lived in Castlemilk and their lifestyle was quite different to mine. As I got older there was a rise in gang culture although nothing that heavy.
- 4. My father was a publican and had a good business. He spent a lot of time at work. My mother became quite unwell and developed mental health issues. She had lost a couple of children who died during birth. She had postnatal depression and that spiralled into serious depression. She became seriously ill and ended up in a mental health hospital where she received electric shock treatment. This really upset me.

- As far as I know there were family discussions about the care of the children. My sister was sent to St Margaret's convent in Edinburgh. About a year later my father approached the priest at St Mark's church. I was failing at school and my dad was worried about me getting through my eleven plus exams. He was finding it difficult to cope because of my mum's health. There were all different reasons that my father was concerned and it was agreed that the best thing for me was to go to a boarding school.
- 6. I had different feelings about going to Carlekemp. In one way I thought I was doing the right thing for my family because my mother was poorly. I was also conscious that I was having issues at school so thought that Carlekemp may be a good opportunity for me to get that sorted. On the other hand I wasn't keen to go and leave my family and the friends I had made.

Carlekemp Boarding School, North Berwick

- 7. Myself and my dad, and possibly my mother went down one day and visited the school. It was all beautiful and everything seemed very posh. It was a very impressive looking building. I would have been ten going on eleven at this time. We subsequently went to Jenners Store in Edinburgh with our list of things I needed to have for school. I got a trunk and got kitted out with everything. Labels were sewn on my blazer and other things with my number. I was Most of the time I was referred to by my surname.
- 8. Carlekemp was run by the Catholic religious order called the Order of St Benedict. It was a preparatory school for Fort Augustus school and if all went well that was where I would end up. Carlekemp was situated off a country road near North Berwick. There were two entrances and a perimeter wall. Going up the driveway, on the right hand side was a rugby field. There was also a cricket field and there were woods on both sides. In the middle was a manicured lawn. There was also a golf course and beautiful views out to sea over to Fife.

- 9. The building itself was Georgian and had elaborate doors at the front. There was a vestibule, then up a few stairs to these doors which led into the hallway. The hallway was very ornate with wood panelling. This hallway was where we studied. It was an intimidating building. On the right hand side was the refectory and a private chapel which faced the back of the building. Above the hall was a gantry and on one side was where the older boys lived. That was the left hand wing of the building. The younger boys' dorms were above the refectory.
- 10. There were roughly between twenty and thirty boys at Carlekemp. No girls. The age range was about seven or eight up to thirteen. The young boys were quite well segregated from the older boys. I started off at the older end of the young ones. There were nominated prefects who kept an eye on everyone. One was called
- 11. In my dormitory there were six of us. I think there were three or four dormitories. Boys were put into groups and each group was named after things like the Bass Rock, Fidra, Craiglea and something else. We played games against each other in these sets. At one end of the dorms towards the laundry room was a priests study and bedroom.
- at Carlekemp. He must have been about six foot tall and in his forties to fifties. He had predominantly grey hair, although he shaved it most of the time. He was fairly gaunt and looked quite austere. His room was next to the sick bay which had a horrible smell of disinfectant. was Father MFA Others there were Father MEY who was Australian, Mr MFB a lay teacher, Father Paul and Father MFC I don't know Father Paul's surname. There was a nurse whose name I can't remember. Miss Greco was a latin teacher. Mr MXA was a teacher. He was obviously gay and was a very odd character. The monks wore black cassocks.
- 13. Initially when I arrived at Carlekemp I suppose I was filled with awe, wonder, love and hope. I was going around trying to be normal and fit in. It was quite clear from the beginning that the staff didn't have the skills to look after children. It was evident they were disillusioned middle aged men who were struggling with a variety of issues. It became apparent that Father MFA was an alcoholic and he was often all over the

place. I believe he had health problems. His hands were stained with nicotine, he was dishevelled and looked dirty. He tried to be kind but wasn't really approachable. He used to live in the stables within the grounds. Some altar boys had to go in every morning and basically help him get out his bed and ready to function. They told me there were lots of empty bottles lying about. I went over once. Where he lived was disgusting. It was very dark, smelly and claustrophobic.

14. A number of priests came from Fort Augustus and I got the impression they came to Carlekemp because they couldn't cope with the rigours of the older school or with the older boys. I think some were either fighting a crisis of faith, problems with drink or other personal problems. They seemed to come down with baggage or issues and they were a bit unstable. I got the impression they were sent to Carlekemp for a break.

Routine at Carlekemp

First day

15. On my first day at school my parents drove me and dropped me off at the school. I was welcomed by Father MFD. He had a chat with my mother and father. I realised from a very early stage that this school was not for me. I saw that there were a number of lonely boys and didn't feel they were getting any love and support. I also saw a lot of violence.

Mornings and bedtime

16. We were woken up early by whoever was on duty. It may even have been a bell ringing. I would get up, have a wash, get dressed and go to mass. Usually whoever was on duty would be in this room during the night. It could be a priest or a lay person. I think there was a rota. After 'lights out' which was usually about 9pm no speaking was allowed in the dorm. If there were any issues through the night you could probably call out and whoever was on duty may come and see you.

Mealtimes/Food

- 17. Father MFA although he was filthy looking, prepared the food at Carlekemp. There were a couple of lay people who helped him in the kitchen. The catering was quite good. When we had meals in the refectory there was a priest or a lay person at the top of each table. There were separate tables with six boys at each table. Father MFD would sit at the top table. Father MFA would sit with the boys.
- 18. For the type of institution it was, the food was of a reasonable standard. I am not aware of there ever being issues if anyone didn't like the food. We had to eat our meals in silence, and sometimes some would be saying prayers.

Washing/bathing

19. There was a small bathroom on the same level as our dorm. There was also a communal area with rows of sinks for washing. There may have been one bath on our landing. In the morning we would generally just wash at the sinks. Baths and showers were downstairs in a stable type building that was attached to the main building. In the bath and shower area we were supervised usually by a lay bloke who trained with St Helen's rugby club. He took us for some of our sport.

Clothing/uniform

20. All my clothing was provided by my parents. I kept it in the locker in the bedroom. All my kit had my number, sewn into it. This meant that when it was sent away to be laundered I got my own clothes back.

Leisure time

21. We did our homework in the main hall. There were rows of boys just sitting doing communal work or homework. We played a lot of sport, usually something every day. We did sport depending on the season. It was either rugby, hockey or cricket but we didn't play football in school time. We played football in our own leisure time.

- 22. At the end of school time, probably after we had eaten something we had some free time. We could more or less do what we wanted in this time. I used to play ping pong in the basement. After free time we had a study period in the hall then after that we went to our rooms.
- 23. At the weekends the staff didn't have much to do with us. If you were into your sport your day was taken up doing that. Apart from that you could do what you wanted. I spent a lot of time on my own exploring the grounds of Carlekemp.

Trips and holidays

24. I had a few day trips with the school. We went in to North Berwick and went up Berwick Law. One time I went to Lindisfarne. The monks took us on these trips. We also had a golf competition. Every holiday period I went home to my mum and dad's house. Some boys stayed at Carlekemp over the holidays. I always felt really sorry for them.

School

- The schooling was within the main building. There were two classrooms just off the main hall. There was a teacher, Mr MFB I can't remember one class that he ever taught. Father MFA occasionally taught Father MFC taught I can't remember anything I learned in that school academically. I wasn't learning anything, I had serious educational problems. My issues were with reading, writing, remembering. Everything really. We had highland dancing and that was quite amusing. A lot of the time I wasn't in class. Most of the time I was excluded from class but sometimes I just didn't go.
- 26. Every day we had an hour of reading in the main hall. There would be other classes like maths, English and history. At some point we would have an hour of sport. We would also get some work set for us. I am sure boys were getting taught things but I wasn't really involved in that. I spent a lot of time either in the woods or in the hall writing out lines. I didn't spend a lot of time in the classroom.

Healthcare

27. I occasionally had to go and see the nurse when I had a sore throat or other ailments. She would give me lozenges. She was quite elderly and frail. I don't know what her qualifications were. Anyone with more serious ailments or injuries were put in the sick bay where there were beds. The sick bay was next to Father MFD room. I never saw a doctor coming in to the school. I hurt my knee once and I was taken up by Father Paul to Edinburgh to get it examined and treated. One boy accidentally got hit in the mouth with a golf club. He was taken to a dentist in North Berwick. I never saw a dentist when I was there. I saw my own dentist when I was back in Glasgow.

Religious instruction

28. We had mass more or less every morning in the chapel. That was our first period. We went to the chapel at other times too. Throughout the day we had some religious prayers.

Work

29. We didn't get any chores to do. We had to keep our bed space and our locker reasonably tidy. We made our bed in the morning and initially they wanted it done a certain way. After a while it didn't really matter.

Birthdays and Christmas

30. Christmas was celebrated in the lead up to it. Sometimes we had a visit from an Archbishop. One time there was a religious procession through the woods in the grounds. All the boys were involved in this procession. I wasn't. Birthdays were celebrated. I got presents delivered from my family. I occasionally got other parcels from my family.

Visits

31. My family never really came to visit me. They came to pick me up when I was coming home for holidays or to drop me off. I am not aware of there ever being any sort of inspection to see how the school was being run. I was never asked by anyone what I thought. Occasionally there were bishops or high priests from Edinburgh who visited and they ate at the top table. Special food was laid on for them. They were shown around the school and extra masses were put on. They never spoke to me.

Family contact

32. I wrote letters home to my parents. I got replies to some. Before I got them I think some of the envelopes had been opened. They sent me some parcels at times too. He sent me sweets and toys. I think I got all the ones I was sent.

Personal possessions

33. Any personal possessions I had were kept in my locker. I didn't really have very much.

Running away

34. I encouraged a few boys to run away with me at one point. I wanted to run away because I wasn't happy there. We climbed the perimeter wall and got across the golf course. We didn't get very far and we turned back. The weather was pretty foul so I didn't think it was viable to go any further. We got back before anybody realised we were missing. I wasn't punished.

Discipline

35. For punishment, if we did something wrong, and if it was fairly minor, we were given lines. We had to write the same thing over and over. We had to do this in the hallway where we did our studying.

Bed Wetting

36. I never had a problem wetting the bed. I am sure it probably happened but I don't know how it was dealt with.

Abuse at Carlekemp



37. On one occasion Father MFA put his hand down my trousers. This was in his office in the main building. It was supposed to be some sort of medical check. There were other boys there but I can't remember their names. He did the same checks on them. I didn't consider it to have been sexual at the time but it was inappropriate. It was over in a second and on the scale of other things that happened it was nothing.



- 38. Father MFD very quickly saw me as a problem. He thought I was a bit mouthy. He was a very cold person. We also got told that basically he was ill as well and he had heart issues. He was often disappearing for a couple of days at a time and there were whispers that he was not well.
- 39. During the night, I was often told to get out of bed for no reason. Different members of staff came in and told me to get up and marched me down the stairs. Sometimes it was Mr MXA and sometimes Father MFA Often other boys were taken out other bedrooms. When we got downstairs we had to kneel outside Father MFD office. Often it would be midnight or one in the morning. The priests were praying in another part of the building. We had to remain there until they had finished. Sometimes there were three or four little boys waiting there. It was dark and we were told to say the rosaries or prayers. We had to stay out there for hours.

- 40. When the priests had stopped praying I could hear them all making their way along the corridor and bedroom doors opening and closing. Eventually Father MFD would arrive and go into his room. He used to take us into his room one at a time and beat us with a leather strap. He always left me to the end so I saw the other boys coming out. They were crying and were in bits. When I went in he was violent and hit me. He hit me with his leather strap six times on each hand. He would then ask me to thank him. He said I should because he was trying to save me. I refused sometimes and he strapped me again on my hands. I don't know why I was being punished. He was a man and he didn't hold back when he hit you. These punishments were for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it was for talking in the dorm after lights out when talking wasn't allowed, or if there had been a fracas in the dorm and I was selected to be punished. Some of the staff weren't keen to issue any punishment themselves so left it for Father MFD who was more than happy to do it. I don't remember who any of the other boys were. I don't know why the other staff didn't punish us. It was just accepted that Father MFD would punish us.
- 41. I would have been around eleven when the beatings from Father becoming more and more violent but I was growing stronger. I became angry and it became a battle of wills. At the worst point I was probably getting beaten twice a week. One night, in the late evening, I was taken into his office and in front of me he phoned my family. He told them he was going to beat me but wanted them to say it was okay. I was horrified by this. They must have told him to do what he had to do. After he hung up he made me take my pyjama trousers down and had me leaning over his bed. He strapped me with his leather belt or a cane across my bare backside. It may have been six times he hit me but I am not sure.
- 42. Apart from the physical side of things, the psychological sort of damage was going on at the time and I was becoming very angry. I was resenting that in a sense it was a different world from the sort of happy North Berwick lovely place that people thought it was. There was a real culture of fear. For me it became very ugly. I hadn't gone there to deal with the loss of my parents. I was there trying to deal with the fact my mother was ill and I already had the feeling that I had been abandoned. I was having to deal with Father MFD and it opened up a completely different world. I became a different

little boy. At that stage I had no fear, I didn't give a shit and I didn't care what Father did to me.

- Attention of the second of the second of the toilet but I hardly ever saw anybody. There was nothing wrong with me. I became more and more isolated from the other boys. I had no friends around me. I was considered to be damaged goods and nobody wanted to hang about with me. I spent more and more time in the woods on my own. Nobody ever bothered what time I came back into the building.
- 44. During my time at Carlekemp I won some badges or colours for sport. I was never given these awards. Occasionally at the end of the week Father MFD would hand out colours to the hockey team after playing well in a match. He gave them to all the other boys but not to me. Once in a cross country running race I did really well and I came close to winning. As soon as I crossed the line Father MFD immediately accused me of cheating. I thought that was appalling.

Father MFD and Father MFA

45. One time a dignitary came to Carlekemp. I can't remember who it was. Father MFA told me, but I believe Father MFD had told him, that I wasn't allowed to participate in the group photograph. I stood in the refectory and watched them out the window. By that time I knew I wasn't wanted. There were other things that went on that day but I wasn't allowed to take part. At some point I remember I put on a small school play. I dressed up as Hitler and referred to Father MFD in this role. This did not go down well. After that they were nervous about me being seen anywhere in public.

46. There was one time a couple of older boys were punished in front of everyone else. It was a public flogging. It happened on a weekend and may have been before we went out to play rugby. We were all in the hall. There was a platform or stage there. I don't know why these two boys were being punished. They were both caned or belted on the hands. I am not sure which it was. It was Father MFD and Father MFA I felt sorry for these two boys. They were not hit very aggressively and it was more symbolic. It was obviously hugely humiliating for these boys. I presume they were being made an example of to send a message to all the other boys.

Father MEY

- despite my young age felt dodgy to me but I wasn't frightened of him. Father despite my young age felt dodgy to me but I don't know why. I didn't like the way he looked at me or at other boys. Periodically I would bump into Father MEY He had a printing press in a little room and was doing a school magazine or something to do with hymns. It was on the ground floor near the refectory. Occasionally I would have to go in there to get something or to give him something. When I went in, he had a young boy sitting on his lap. A very young boy, probably under ten, and MEY had his hands down the boys trousers playing with him. It was provocative and obvious. He wasn't ashamed of it. It was almost that he wanted me to see it. I was appalled at that stage. The young boy looked completely shattered. He looked like a little lost soul really. I saw him doing this on more than one occasion. Sometimes it was in his printing room and sometimes in the classroom.
- 48. I bumped into Father MEY again at another time in a classroom. I had wandered in and again he was sitting with a young boy, probably about ten, and he was touching him down the front of the boy's trousers. I don't know if he was masturbating the boy or not. It wasn't that he was sitting having a cuddle, it was sexual and Father MEY was basically making me aware that it was sexual. I think I saw him doing this about four times altogether. I don't know who the boys were or even if they were all different but they were all about the same age. Some incidents may even have been the same boy. The other priests must have been aware because he was so open about it. By that stage my view was that the whole place was very corrupt.

Reporting of abuse at Carlekemp

- 49. One time I went to the nurse, whose name I can't remember, the day after I had been strapped through the night by Father MFD. Her name may have been Mrs Quinn. She was very thin and was Irish. My hands were swollen. I told her what had happened but she wasn't interested and she never did anything. There were a lot of people who were being targeted and punished like I was. They were too scared to speak out or tell anyone. There was no one else at Carlekemp who I could confide in or tell what was happening.
- I was writing letters home to say that I wasn't happy about various things. When I got home I asked to see the letters I wrote and the letters were all redacted. There were black lines through sections. Under it were other comments stating the spelling was shaky and they didn't want to give the wrong impression of the school. I was telling my mother but I didn't want to lay it on too thick because I was worried about her. I had lost a bit of confidence in her as well. I was obviously sad for what was happening to my mum but also I was raging that they actually put me in this situation in the first place. I don't think my mum wanted to believe me. Had she been in a better place she probably would have pursued it.
- 51. At holiday time there were another couple of children who were going back to Glasgow so we alternated which parents would pick up and drop off. One was a boy who was the same age as me. One time I was travelling home with the and it was a long journey and they asked me how I was getting on. I told them it was horrible but they didn't like that and told me it was a good Catholic school. I told them that I was getting beat up. I may have told them that other boys were getting fiddled with. They didn't believe me and said I was a fantasist. I used to say this on the journey back home with various people that picked me up but they didn't want to know. Nobody really listened to me.

Leaving Carlekemp

- 52. I sat the entrance examination for Fort Augustus. I knew that was the natural route that I was expected to take. I didn't want to go there because I hated my time at Carlekemp and Fort Augustus was only going to get worse. When I sat the exam I basically wrote my name on the exam paper and that was really all I did. Despite the fact I did this I was still offered a place at Fort Augustus.
- There were discussions between myself and Father MFD before I left Carlekemp. He accused me of being involved in a practice called 'pill punching' which basically means punching other boys in the balls. This was not the case as I was never involved in anything like that. I am not sure if it was a trend that was going on in the school. The next thing was that I was asked to leave. I was told basically that I wasn't fitting in. In my opinion things were building up all the time when I was there. I left in 1971. I was there for three full terms. I left when I was twelve. I can't remember if it was the actual end of term or if it was still within term time. I remember packing my bags and my dad came to collect me. Father MFD saw me off.

Life after Carlekemp

- 54. After Carlekemp, I went back with my dad to live in Glasgow. I found it a bit difficult to integrate with some of my old friends. They had gone to a local school and I had gone to a posh school. My father arranged me to go to St Aloysius school which was a bit of a disaster because it was highly academic. I struggled. I truanted a lot from school. I just didn't like it. I got into trouble for truanting. I left school at fifteen, almost sixteen without any qualifications.
- I have always been a people person and I ended up working in the Gorbals area of Glasgow at the doing some voluntary work. I would have been sixteen. I then went to work in a women's hostel for the Simon community. I dealt with homeless men and women. I started to have stronger political views. There was a spell when I was there that I became a bit disillusioned. My father was considering coming

out of retirement and wanted to buy a small public house. I was about 21 at the time and he suggested I work with him. That would probably have been my life mapped out after that because eventually I would have taken over the whole business from my father. I worked for him for about three years. One night I was attacked in the pub and the pub was wrecked. I decided this wasn't the life for me.

1 ended up going to college where I did a writing course. I started wanting to learn because I was enjoying it. I went to another college in London. Initially I was going to do social work but then started doing a course on politics. After that I went to Sussex University. By that time I was in my early thirties. During this course I was diagnosed with very profound dyslexia. I didn't get any help on my university course. I took a year out and worked in social work. I went back to university but only gained a poor pass in my subject.



Impact

59. Carlekemp didn't recognise that I had profound dyslexia. This diagnosis explains my isolation and my extreme lack of educational opportunity. They didn't have the skill set to identify that I had a specific learning disability and wasn't getting the appropriate

support. My mum approached the school when I was at St Mark's primary. That was before I went to Carlekemp and she was told that I appeared to be bright but I was struggling with school work. The teacher, whose name I can't remember told my mum that I might be dyslexic. This information was never passed to Carlekemp or if it was they didn't offer me any help or support.

- 60. In a sense it could be seen that Carlekemp did a good job and made me the person that I am today. I went in there a wee boy and by the time I came out it gave me different perspective on the world. At Carlekemp, because I spent so much time on my own, I was forced to rely on my imagination and that opened a great deal of resources to me. This has developed me as a person but it also had a down side as well. It opened up a sensitive side to me that has helped me appreciate certain things in life I may not have appreciated. I was put under stress and strain. By dealing with that in my way has made me a stronger person. This has helped me in my creative endeavour especially in relation to my creative writing.
- 61. Being at Carlekemp has definitely affected my ability to trust people and I don't like rejection. This manifested itself in some of my relationships. My own religious beliefs have been affected by my experiences with the priests. I saw the priests as the agents of god and represented a higher being. This could have been why I became more involved in politics. I was moving away from solutions based on divine powers to looking at solutions based on human activity. I didn't believe in god or abide to any religious institutions.
- 62. Our family weren't as religious as some. My father wasn't religious at all. My mum was a little more so but not overtly. Priests were seen as of high status and were to be respected. As soon as I started living with them I saw them as flawed human beings. It was obvious that they were struggling with their own issues.



Treatment / support

64. I have never sought any support or treatment in relation to the effect Carlekemp has had on me.

Reporting of Abuse

65. I have never reported anything that happened to me or anything I witnessed to the police or anybody else. I have always been a bit wary of the police. I don't have any negative views about them, I just didn't want to get involved with them. For years I didn't necessarily think what happened to me was abuse. I just thought it was what happened at boarding school and it was normal behaviour. Over the years and having time to reflect I realised that it was not normal behaviour. What happened to me was beyond what could have been classed as reasonable corporal punishment which was legal at that time. There was no justification for taking children out their bed at night and having them kneel for hours outside a room in darkness, terrifying them with the anticipation of what was going to happen and then beating them. To get children to go into their bedroom and abuse them through the night like that was so wrong.

Records

66. I contacted a legal firm at the beginning of 2018 in Edinburgh that held the records for Carlekemp. I made a formal notification that I wanted my records. Eventually they said I could see my records. They subsequently sent me, by email, some records. It was basically four pages which were all heavily redacted. It was rubbish. There was nothing of substance. No mention of any issues, no discipline, no school records and nothing medical. I queried it with them but they just said that was all they held.

Lessons to be Learned

- 67. A lot has changed since the 1970s and I can't see things that went on then being repeated today. Abuse of all sorts and forms can take place in all sorts of establishments and places. The institutions need to have a safeguarding framework because human beings have got the propensity to be corrupt or to be corruptible. Some people may not realise this is happening to them but other people might be better placed to point it out to them. It can't be left to expect the individuals to come forward and admit they are struggling, not coping or exploring their sexuality and don't know where to turn.
- 68. People are in crisis even today, and they need a framework around them to be able to get support and to acknowledge where that crisis might lead. Had this been in place when I was at Carlekemp there was a whole range of behaviours that were deliberately not tackled robustly enough. As far as I can see the Order of St Benedict's just moved people around and thought they had resolved the problem. Instead this was pushing the problem somewhere else, and sometimes where there were more vulnerable children.

Other information

- 69. Father Paul, who was at Carlekemp, was a nice bloke. He seemed to be normal, and he told me one day he was leaving the Order of St Benedict's. He said he was going to leave the priesthood to be a social worker. He told me this when he was driving me from North Berwick to Edinburgh in his car. We didn't talk very much during that journey, but I got the impression he knew the place was corrupt.
- 70. 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.

