

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

MMH

Support person present: No

1. My name is MMH I am known as MMH My date of birth is 1947. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

**Family background**

2. My mother, came from a family of devout Catholics and my father, came from a family of Anglicans. Their marriage was conditional on their children being educated in the Catholic system. My family lived comfortably, you could say we were middle class. We lived for a time in England and later, our home was in Scotland. I had three siblings, we all went to boarding schools.

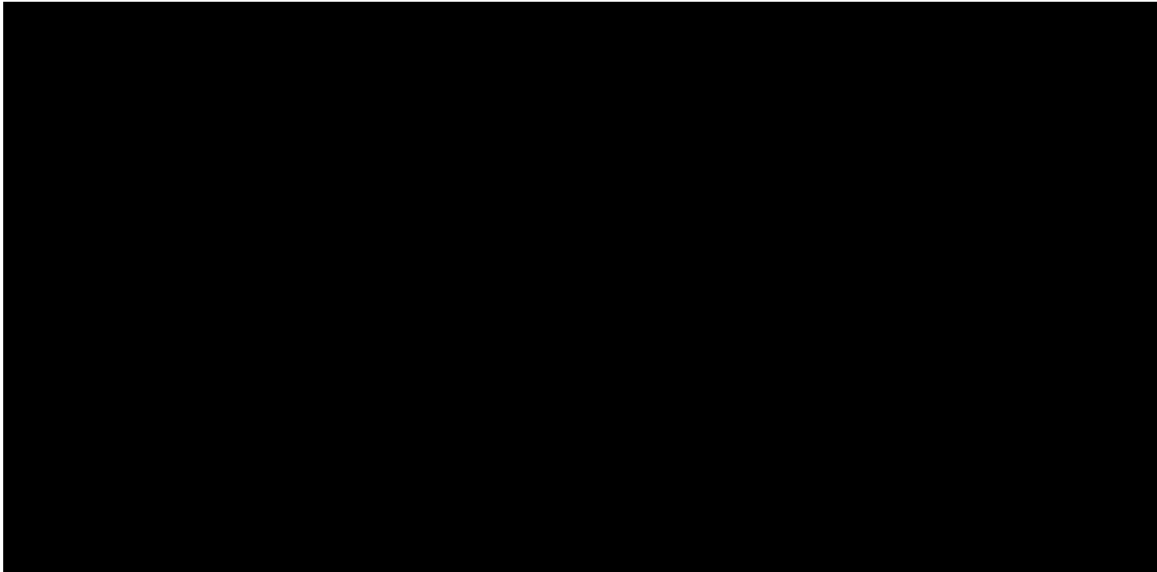
**Boarding Schools in England**

3.

[Redacted]

4.

[Redacted]



### **Fort Augustus Abbey School**

5. I took the Eleven-plus exam. You didn't have to pass it to go to the Abbey school, you just had to show you were compos mentis, that you could read and write. There was no interview. I went to the Abbey School in 1961 when I was thirteen years old. I stayed there until 1964. That was a different life.
  
6. My older brother was at the Abbey school. I can't remember being at school with my elder brother. In those days, brothers never talked to each other. An elder brother didn't want anything to do with you. I saw my brother in the holidays. He said to me, about the school, "You better watch out, you better not do this, you better not do that or you'll get the birch." He was building it up a bit for me. One day my brother showed me cane marks on his buttocks and said that was what I'd be getting.
  
7. We walked into the school from underneath what we called the Tower. It was a clock tower, with a clock on it. Big doors opened up and you go up some stairs into a hall. To the left was the refectory and classroom. To the right were more classrooms. You went up one set of stairs in the Tower to get to the dormitory. The new part of the building was on your right. It was fairly modern, probably built in the late fifties. There were about 200 boys at the school. The numbers were slowly going down. The

youngest boys were around twelve years old. The oldest were seventeen or eighteen years old. I left at sixteen years old.

8. To outsiders and parents, everything looked to be in order at the school. When I started at school, I noticed that the boys were different and did not behave freely, in comparison to my previous boarding schools. The boys often spoke in whispers because there were so many places where complete silence was the law. There was little freedom or fun, unless you could get away, outside of school. I still see a class of pale, anxious faces, expecting the worst.
9. The new boys quickly learned to avoid eye contact with certain monks, it was a survival instinct. We knew that any eye contact could be an order for the monk to do something to you, a punishment for something, recognition or a violent outburst. It was much better and safer to find a sudden interest in the wall or floor as you passed. We were never ordered to look away as part of the school rules

*Staff at Fort Augustus Abbey School*

10. I had two SNR. The first was MFF and the second was MKT. MKT MFF was at school for one or two years. The SNR usually had a spell of four or five years each. There were monks, brothers and all sorts of other hangers-on. Some taught and others you never really saw, except at odd times, out on the loch fishing or gardening. The brothers did all the work, like washing up and cleaning. The monks did all the teaching. I'm convinced a number of them weren't qualified to teach. I looked up an obituary of one of the monks and there was no mention of him going to any school for teaching. It seemed to be that, once you became a monk, you were equipped for teaching.
11. My housemaster throughout my time at school was MFG. He was a monk. MFG was young, about 30 to 35 years old. He was a processor of beating boys, one after another. He was very moody. There was another housemaster called MFE. He was in his seventies or eighties. MFE

**MFE** had a reputation for being a bully and always having a bad temper. He picked on the smaller boys, often without notice.

12. Father **MEV** was one of the few priests who were rumoured to be a 'homo', that's what we called them, in those days. It was a name that you don't hear today. Father **MEV** never molested me. Another priest was Father **MEY**. I notice that the press were after **MEY** in Australia, then he dropped dead. I found out later that Father **MEY** and Father Aidan Duggan **[REDACTED]**
13. There were also lay teachers. The lay teachers generally treated the boys well.

### **Routine at Fort Augustus Abbey School**

#### *First day*

14. We went to school by train, via Fort William train station. There would be two hundred boys on the train, it was mayhem. The boys would be sticking their heads out of the windows. We were living in Scotland by then. The train never left until lunchtime or after, so you didn't get into Fort William until it was dark, late at night. The school bus would be waiting for you. The trunks must have come separately because I don't remember loading them on.
15. Arriving at the school for the first time was a terrifying experience. You get to the school and it's about 11:30 pm and it's dark. You are ushered into this huge hall with dark panels everywhere and hardly any light. You don't know where you are or what's going on. There's a smell like you wouldn't be believe, a real school, gym shoe smell, a horrible smell. The monks said which dormitory was yours and told you to go that way. There was a bed in the dormitory. That was it, into bed.

*Mornings and bedtime*

16. We slept in dormitories. I don't think the dormitories had any names. When I first went to the Abbey school, I went to a dormitory in the new wing. There were no stalls between the beds, you could look down and see the row of beds. There were twenty beds in the room. I spent a year in that dormitory. The other boys were all the same age as me. The next year, we were allocated one of the older dormitories, above where a fire later took place.
17. We rose at 5.30 am. There was a bell that went off. You got up and went to the bathroom, washed yourself and did your teeth. You dressed and went straight down to the church. Every day you had mass in the church. Then you went for breakfast.
18. After breakfast, there was half an hour where you made your bed and got your books and things. Making your bed was typical boarding school stuff, there was nothing untoward about that to me. Every morning at 9:00 am, there was assembly. You all had to assemble, say a prayer and then you went to classes. The dormitory was out of bounds during the day.
19. Bedtime was at about 9.30 pm. There were prayers before bedtime in the church. There was silence, you weren't allowed to talk in the dormitory. Last thing at night, **MFG** the housemaster, would be walking up and down the dormitory, sometimes with a strap in his hand. The housemaster was making sure you were in bed, lights were out and finally you'd hear the footsteps walking off.

*Mealtimes / Food*

20. Meals for all the boys were in the Refectory. There were prayers before, during and after meals. The monks sat at a different table from the boys. The monk's table was up high, looking down. They were observing the entire procedure, seeing if anyone got out of line. The refectory was huge. The tables were long. You had a class table. I think there were two class tables for us because there were about thirty boys in our

class. At the end of each table was a prefect. The boys all sat along the side and moved around one seat at the table every day. You queued up for your meal. You'd all take turns serving up. Sometimes a boy would pick up a tureen of porridge and put a ladleful in each boy's bowl.

21. The food was average. I never complained about bad food. It was monotonous food, which you'd expect. I was never hungry. There was porridge every morning. You would get soup, a meal and always dessert. Dessert was always the same, semolina and junket, that sort of old style stuff. If you left food, no-one seemed to care. Every now and then, there'd be something really odd. You'd come in for lunch and there'd be a big salmon that someone had caught. The brothers made their own bread. I'd never seen loaves so long.
22. I can only remember one prefect at the end of our table, I don't want to name him. He was an academic type. He never said much, he was quiet and kept himself to himself. You never saw him playing sports. The prefect was always in his room studying. As far as I can recall, you weren't allowed to talk during meals. There was silence and the hum of prayers being said. If you were talking, the prefect would be the one to do you in. Other than that I don't remember any bad things about the prefect.

*Washing / bathing*

23. There were showers and baths, right down in the sports area. The area had a row of showers along one wall, with big heads. On the other side was row of about twelve baths. All the pipes were on show. There was no delicacy about it. You had a bath once a month. No-one complained because you had regular showers. Every time you had sport, you had a shower. We had showers in the morning too. You would go in, there would be hot water then cold. There was a monk to put the water on and off, MFE and he loved every minute of it.

*Clothing / uniform*

24. You always wore school uniform. When you went on three weeklies, into the hills, you wore your sports gear. I never had a pair of jeans, or anything like that, at school.

*Religious Instruction*

25. Sunday was the day of hell. Religious instruction was pretty heavy. You got up in the morning and went to church. You'd have matins in the morning. After breakfast you'd go back to church and have High Mass. High Mass is a three hour episode of bells ringing, people singing, organs, Gregorian chanting, swinging of thuribles with incense and spraying the congregation with holy water. The monks loved it all. It was a theatrical thing. After lunch we had a break from it. In the evening we went back for more. By the time you went to bed, you thought you didn't want to have any more to do with this religion.
26. The main intention seemed to be, to drum up some recruits. We were all told, individually, several times, to keep going the way you were and you would be a wonderful priest. We boys used to talk amongst ourselves and joining the priesthood was a big joke.
27. Once a year, we had a three day religious retreat, where you weren't allowed to talk for three days. The boys dreaded that, we didn't look forward to it. The monks brought in an outside lecturer, a monk who was well known and holy. A lecturer the monks brought in ended up leaving the church and getting married, just a few months after our retreat. I can't remember his name. He was quite famous. As far as the boys were concerned, we had listened to that guy, for all that time, for nothing. To us, he was a fake. In those days, monks getting married was unheard of.

*Chores*

28. You had to keep everything spic and span. It was a bit like the army. You had a locker and everything in it had to be tidy. In the locker was a vest, underpants, socks and things like that. You were beaten or given the strap, if it wasn't right. The housemaster would inspect the locker. If you fell out with another boy, or if boys didn't like you, they would mess up your locker. The next thing, you got a hiding. You soon knew if you weren't liked. You never found out who had messed up your locker but all of us used to get caught by that now and then. The housemaster should have had enough sense to know that some other boy was doing that but they just caned you for the sake of it.

*Sports*

29. Saturday was Sports Day and we played games on Wednesday afternoon too. The teams would go up on a list. Sports Day was okay if you were good at sports. If you weren't, or you weren't interested in sports, you were left behind. Sports was compulsory. I was surprised how good I was at sports, I played cricket, hockey and rugby against other schools. We played cricket against Gordonstoun and I was chosen to sit opposite Prince Charles at the table afterwards. We had a good chat about fly fishing.

*Leisure time*

30. Every three weeks, there was a 'three weekly'. You would be told at assembly that today was a three weekly. Then you'd run and get your old clothes on. You would form a little group of three or four and go off into the hills to do what you wanted to do for the day.. The younger kids had to go with a monk. I recall Father MEV taking a whole group of younger ones into the hills somewhere.
31. You had a bit of time on Sunday when you could do club things, like photography, library, music or choir practice, acting rehearsals, sport or hobbies. In the evenings you had the Choral Society and acting. I put my name down for every single club. Once you got into acting, the school went around the towns putting shows on. You got to go out to Inverness and Fort William. If you played cricket, you got to go out to



play other schools. With all of these things, I was getting away from that place. You had special time off school for practice.

32. There was no television in the four years I was at school and I did not see or use a telephone once. In the winter, when it snowed heavily, we would sometimes be cut off for a week or two at a time. We never noticed anything different. We sometimes ice skated on Loch Tarff, which was great fun. We could bob-sled down Glendoe Road. In the summer, the monks would fill the swimming pool with ice cold water pumped from Loch Ness.
33. We would go home for holidays. There were no trips at the Abbey school. It was the complete opposite to my second prep school, where we went on lots of trips to places. The only way you'd get out of the Abbey school was if you were the member of a team or you were acting.
34. My birthday was in the middle of the term, nothing ever changed on your birthday.

#### *Education*

35. There were two types of teachers, the monks and the lay teachers. The lay teachers were generally Catholics. They were an oddball mix. The teachers had a room to stay in, in the Hospice. They came out every day for teaching, then went back in.
36. The standard of teaching was not good. Not many people got to university through the school. I don't think anyone from my class went to university. I got my degree later. The accent was on sport and winning. I was good at French.
37. The monks were not good teachers because they were not tolerant. They ruled with a rod. The monks were more concerned about someone speaking in class or passing wind rather than saying, "Come and look at this, this is exciting, I'm going to tell you how it works." Classes were regimental to the point where you didn't want to learn and you looked out of the window. I'm sure some of the teachers were good but they just couldn't communicate. That's why they were monks, they'd rather rush

away, lock themselves up and pray. When it came to boys, the monks had little interaction with them. I finished with four or five O' Levels. That was all I got. I could not carry on in that atmosphere and left school early.

38. The monks came and went. In my view, some were not qualified teachers. The school would have had to pay for qualified teachers. The qualified monk was called Father [REDACTED] MRQ . He was the [REDACTED] teacher. He qualified at university. Father [REDACTED] MRQ made the lessons interesting, he was good.
39. Father [REDACTED] MEV taught us [REDACTED] That was a complete disaster. One day, he decided to teach us about sex. The class was one of fifteen year old boys, some who knew more than he did about the subject. He drew a primitive drawing of an erect penis, with sperm coming out of it, on the blackboard. The drawing invited uproar in the class. [REDACTED] MEV talked of how young boys like us would get excited when we saw women's bottoms going up and down, when they swam breast stroke at the swimming pool. He went into detail about the up and down motion. It was embarrassing for all of us. I almost felt sorry for [REDACTED] MEV because he was so pathetic. Looking back as an adult, I suspect he was throwing the net out to find out who might have questions about sex that he could answer in private.

#### *Visits*

40. We had various special days, you looked forward to them. We'd have Parent's Day, Old Boy's Day and Half Term. At Half Term, the parents were allowed to come up. My mother and father came once and stayed at the local hotel. They took me out to dinner there. It was good fun, I really enjoyed it. It's the only time I remember my parents coming up to school.
41. I don't ever remember any outside inspections taking place. There was not one person to approach in the school who showed the slightest interest in our plight.

*Healthcare*

42. There was a matron. Matron ran her own show and lived in the lodge at the end of the school buildings, away from everything. Matron's sick rooms were there. There was a doctor in the village, Doctor Curtain was about 95 years old. No-one ever wanted to have anything to do with him. His hands shook and he couldn't see what he was doing. The best thing was to get to Inverness as quickly as possible, to the hospital.
43. I went to the dentist many times. It was one way of getting out of school. You'd get away for the day. You would get on the bus and go to Inverness for the day. You'd see the dentist and then go back on the bus. The monks trusted you to do that. Some boys ran away. I thought about it but didn't.

*Incidence of Fire at Fort Augustus Abbey School*

44. There were two fires at school when I was there. In the first fire, the area where the fire took place was a tinderbox, just waiting to go up, with the wood panelling. The fire took place directly below our dormitory, below the clock tower. The child who lit the fire had chosen the perfect spot, where all the empty school trunks were stored, piled up. This was the third time, in the third school that this kid had lit a fire. I can't remember his name.
45. The fire was a nightmare. It was a big fire. It was dark and there were no lights. I realised then how complicated the building was. We went the wrong way into the monastery. The monastery was corridors and corridors of old wooden panels, with doors leading off. It was all full of smoke and it was night too. I'd never been in that part of the building before. We were lucky to get out of that one. There was a lot of change in school after that.

46. Another boy, who I don't want to name, was so traumatised by the monks, he self-harmed for six months before setting fire to the school library. As far as I know, he was never bullied by the other boys. He was fifteen years old.

*Discipline*

47. For punishments about academic things, you went to the headmaster. For naughty stuff, you went to your housemaster. The monks went overboard with discipline. Whenever I objected to something being unfair, it would bring problems for me, including beatings. It did not pay to complain. During the term, my anxiety would build up. Minor infringements were dealt with by disproportionate and inconsistent punishments, always of a physical nature. Rarely were we given lines or a detention. It was always a beating.
48. We were ordered to see the housemaster at set times for punishment. You were given a note by a monk or lay teacher and sent to the housemaster. The monks who gave the notes were known for not beating the boys. There would be a dull, nagging pain at the bottom of my stomach, worsening as the time got closer. There was often a queue outside the housemaster's room, where lots of boys would also be waiting for their punishment. This waiting added extra cruelty. The housemaster, MFG MFG might not be there and several visits were required. The waiting could go on for a week. This had a strong, negative, psychological effect on the victim. Without exaggerating, averaging it out, I was sent for punishment at least four times a week. You handed your note in and you were punished. At the end of each caning or beating, we were required to say, "Thank you, Father." If you forgot those words, you were beaten again.
49. Being struck on our hands with a leather strap, six times on each hand, was standard. MFG and MFE were the monks who did that. One hand was outstretched with the palm up and the strap was brought down. The same process would follow with the other hand. No lay teachers or brothers struck us with the strap.

### **Abuse at Fort Augustus Abbey School**

50. I have always known that I had been physically and psychologically abused at the Abbey School when I was between thirteen and sixteen years old. I believe I was sexually abused as well, by SNR MFF. On two occasions, he made me strip naked and caned me. My abusers were the Benedictine monks of the school. They were in a position of trust, appointed to safeguard my welfare and education. My parents maintained absolute confidence in their fidelity. Regrettably, a number of monks betrayed this trust by wilfully abusing the boys under their care.
51. The boys were conditioned into a submissive state by the use of terror. The monks controlled the boys and their minds. We were instructed to repeat, "Thank you Father," at the end of each caning or beating. All of the boys were getting the same treatment, although I think a few of us got it a bit harsher in the later years because we stood up to the monks.
52. As well as being flogged, we endured endless psychological abuses. Some boys endured sexual abuse. I heard rumours about certain monks but I did not know, at the time, any boy who was being sexually abused. The types of mistreatment I received varied widely. The abuse was mixed, to the point that I could not be sure whether it was sexual, physical, psychological, emotional, verbal, social, cultural or even spiritual abuse.
53. There were many places where silence was the law and if you were caught talking, you'd be caned. Boys talked in whispers and looked over their shoulders to see if

monks were hiding somewhere. Boys avoided eye contact with certain monks and kept out of their way. When you passed a monk, you faced the wall or looked at the floor. Physical attacks could come without warning, sometimes for trivial offences and sometimes for none. By the end of my first year, I realised I was in a living hell from which there was no escape, except death or the school holidays. At the end of our holidays when we knew we had to return to school, a state of depression would take over. I didn't want to go back. It was no wonder that sometimes boys didn't return.

54. There were times boys were so stressed, they behaved irrationally. There was a Polish boy who, when upset by the monks, would drink litres of water in a short space of time. He once drank so much water, that he passed out. Another boy dived into Loch Ness and kept swimming until he was out of sight. A boat had to be sent to find him. It was considered a suicidal act, to swim in the loch, because of the cold temperature of the water.

MFF

55. MFF who was SNR was about 55 years old. He and MKT MKT another SNR took it upon themselves to carry out beatings. Their beatings were a bit more serious. They used a cane. They would make a big scene about it. Clothes would come off and boys would be kneeling on chairs or naked over the back of beds. MFF was known for his naked canings. We had to remove every stitch of our clothing, including our socks, in preparation for beatings. No normal minded child would agree to do these kind of things without protesting. We never protested.

56. MFF and MKT used different canes. The canes varied in colour and thickness. Traditional canes would have a curl on the end. These canes were not like that, the canes were long and dark. Some were really long, almost a metre and a half long. MFF was so small, the cane was almost out of his control. MFF was the most vicious man there ever was.

57. Of the naked canings that [MFF] did, there were two that involved me. I was thirteen to fourteen years old. One was in his office and the other was in a dormitory. Seven or eight of us boys were marched by [MFF] to the dormitory. It was not the dormitory we were supposed to sleep in. For some reason [MFF] took us to a new dormitory that we'd never been in before. We never knew who slept in that dormitory. I'm convinced now, having gone over the events in my mind many times, that these canings were pre-planned. It wasn't just, we'll go up there and we'll do it. The reasons why I think that are, the dormitory was lighter, you could see more and there were no stalls between the beds.
58. We all had to strip naked and kneel over the back of the bed, holding on to the bed. We all had to stand and watch each other being beaten, one after the other. There were so many things happened on that occasion that it was almost unbelievable. First of all, [MFF] demonstrated how we were to do it. It was too precise, it was annoying. [MFF] knelt down and said, "This is how I want you." The first boy knelt down and [MFF] moved the boy's hands and buttocks, this way and that way into the right place. He didn't do that with everyone. He might have moved one boy with the cane, like prodding cattle.
59. When [MFF] started caning, after the fourth or fifth blow, this strange thing happened. Every boy's legs flew out from underneath them and the boy went on to the ground, hanging on to the bed. It was weird. [MFF] kept going, hell for leather. On about the fourth or fifth boy, I noticed something fly off the end of the cane.
60. Everyone went through the procedure, going to the bed, kneeling down and being caned. You wouldn't believe this but [MFF] forgot me. I had to make a split second decision, what do I do? Let [MFF] walk out or say, "Please Father, you've forgotten me?" Like an idiot, I said, "Please Father, you've forgotten me." It was peer pressure, if I hadn't been done, one of those boys could have dobbed me in and said I hadn't been done. I would have been worrying about it for weeks, when was I getting done? [MFF] gave me ten strokes. There was blood going down my leg.

61. After the beating, MFF left and we were in the dormitory for a few minutes, talking looking at each other's wounds. Nudity didn't count, we were used to that in the showers. One boy was so bad, we thought we couldn't possibly leave him like this and he'd have to go to matron. The blood was down at his ankles. I looked in the corner for the thing that flew off the end of the cane. I found it. It was a little lump of lead. It looked like a bullet. In my opinion, it had been poured into the end of the cane and left to set. I kept it as a memento and showed it to my parents. My parents didn't believe me and said I was making it up.
62. This is how bad it was, the next thing, the door burst open and in came the housemaster with his strap. I'm almost certain it was MFG The housemaster said, and I remember the words, "Talking in the dormitory." All of us got six on each hand, right there and then. We were still naked. There is no doubt that the housemaster was waiting outside the dormitory for our caning to finish and then he was going to come in and get us. I was so upset. We were so stunned, for talking in the dormitory, we got that punishment. When we left the dormitory, we got lost. We didn't know where we were because we had never been in that dormitory. It was scary.
63. In my first year at school, three of us were caught for sitting in the school church and throwing balls of paper at the other boy's heads. We didn't know MFF was at the back of the church, watching us. MFF told us to see him after lunch. We thought we in for a strapping but when we got into his office, MFF told us to take our trousers and underpants off. In the office, the chair had been set up in the right position for the first boy. The first boy knelt on the chair, his backside was where we could all see it. MFF went to do the first caning and the boy's shirt fell down on his bum. MFF told us all to take our shirts off, so there we were again, all of us naked. MFF appeared to like other boys watching whilst he caned a boy.
64. Each time a boy got on the chair MFF didn't cane them straight away, he took a while, he was looking at the boy. Why would you take such a long time, looking? I think there was a sexual thing and the same with the one in the dormitory. I never thought about it at the time, we were so terrified. The place had been prepared, this



guy was looking for his jollies. Other boys spoke of the same thing, how MFF took his time to look at them before he caned them.

MKT

65. MKT was about fifty years old. He was very odd. MKT was tall, bald and overbearing. He taught MKT badly. MKT looked down on us, you could never have conversation with him. We called him MKT MKT didn't like me from day one. I don't know why.
66. MKT caned me four or five times. He would cane you between six and ten strokes. When I was sixteen years old, he caned me and I really didn't know what I was punished for. On the spur of the moment, it had gone through my mind to throttle MKT to stop him assaulting me. MKT was bigger than me and I thought of the ramifications. I shut up and took it. The monks had you totally, mentally under their control.
67. I was caught by MKT talking in assembly. MKT instructed me to report to him at his office when classes had finished that day. I got to his office at 2.30 pm. MKT told me to go outside and stand in front of his office window. His office was on the ground floor. He could look out at me standing there. It was winter and the temperature was low. There was a cold breeze and snow on the ground. I was not dressed to be outside. I was wearing my school jacket and long trousers.
68. At first I was not concerned. After about an hour, I started to get really cold. My feet were freezing and I had no gloves. The school rules decreed that we were not allowed to put our hands in our pockets. I knocked on MKT window and asked to be let in. I thought he had forgotten about me. MKT was sitting at his desk, with his back to me. He told me to stand there for longer. MKT appeared to be laughing.
69. Mrs Ward, one of the school cleaners, walked past me on her way home. Mrs Ward stopped, turned around and asked me what I doing out in the cold. I told her I was sent out to stand there by the SNR Mrs Ward said that the SNR had

done this before and it's wasn't right. She told me when I got too cold, to go inside and ignore [MKT] orders.

70. By 4.00 pm it was beginning to get dark. Mr Hunkin, a lay English teacher, walked by and looked at me in a strange way. Another hour went by. It was dark and I was really cold and shivering. I was seriously considering disobeying [MKT] orders.

71. I had been outside for three hours, maybe more, when Mr Hunkin passed by again. I remember every word he said to me. He said, "This is no good, no good at all, you had better come inside and warm up before you freeze to death." I felt like vomiting and I was shivering badly. My hands and feet were numb. Mr Hunkin took me into his room. I had never been into that part of the school before. Hunkin's room was a single room in the hospice. The room was small and warm, with an electric fire in the corner. I sat by the fire for an hour or more before I got back to feeling normal. Hunkin never said much. I could tell by his demeanour and head shaking that he was not very impressed by what [SNR] had done to me. I might have died of exposure out there. I went back into the school buildings. I had missed supper. I went to bed cold, depressed, and hungry.

72. The following day, [MKT] ignored me as he walked past. I supposed my punishment was over. From that time on I avoided him as best I could. I went to my parents and asked to leave the school. They did not force me to stay. I found out later that I was not the only boy that [MKT] had picked on. Those boys chose to leave the school as well. I don't wish to name those boys.

[MFG]

*and Others, names not known*

73. My housemaster, [MFG] was the main monk to use the strap on me. Most of the vicious monks had worked out how to bring the strap down so that the strap came down 60 millimetres over the far side of the hand and the base of the thumb. This made the strap curl around under the thumb and hit the soft spot on the back of the hand. The strap would damage the veins on the back of the hand.

Sometimes the veins would ooze blood under the skin, leaving blood clots and bruising, which took ages to go away.

74. I went in for further punishments when my hand was still damaged, sometimes a week later. The pain was excruciating and the earlier wounds would open up and be made worse. I played cricket and at times found catching and bowling difficult due to the pain. What the monks were doing to me really upset me. I still have scars from being hit with the strap.

Father [REDACTED] MEW

75. The [REDACTED] teacher, Father [REDACTED] MEW, was a dreadful man. Every week he put a list of six to ten boys on the board in red ink, who were to go to the [REDACTED] SNR to get punished because they'd failed their weekly test. The test was fifty words you had to learn every week. I was good at [REDACTED] so it didn't worry me. The same boys would appear in the queue at the [REDACTED] SNR office every week because they weren't good at [REDACTED]. They weren't lazy or bad. I was horrified by that, that the school would punish someone because of their lack of mental acumen.
76. One day, my name was on the list. I challenged Father [REDACTED] MEW and asked what I'd done wrong. He said I'd missed a [REDACTED] out in one of the letters. I said that I'd like to see that, please. Father [REDACTED] MEW banged me on the head, really hard, with his knuckles. It was sore and two weeks later I still had bruises on my head. I had to go to the [REDACTED] SNR for my punishment. I can't remember whether it was [REDACTED] MFF or [REDACTED] MKT who punished me on that occasion.
77. The worst incident with [REDACTED] MEW happened to a boy named [REDACTED]. There were three [REDACTED] brothers. One had left school when I got there. [REDACTED] was called out in the middle of [REDACTED] class. Ten minutes later, he came back in tears. [REDACTED] said at the top of his voice that his brother had just been killed. He had been killed in a head-on car collision. His brother was only 21 years old. [REDACTED] MEW told the boy [REDACTED] to stop disrupting the class with his tears or he would be sent to the [REDACTED] SNR. We were flabbergasted by this cold-heartedness. The class

started to shout and carry on. MEW was losing control of the class. We were so angry at the way he treated [REDACTED]. A boy's brother was killed and the monks sent him back into the class, what sort of school is that? There was no-one to console him or put an arm around him.

[REDACTED] MFE

78. The housemaster of Lovat House, [REDACTED] MFE was a brutal beast. He was particularly brutal to the younger boys. Once, in my first two years at school, I was walking past [REDACTED] MFE room when he saw me with one hand in my pocket. This was forbidden. He lashed out with his leather strap across my head. [REDACTED] MFE grabbed my hair and said I was lucky I didn't have two hands in my pockets. [REDACTED] MFE had cut me on my tongue and lips. I could not eat or talk properly for more than a week. The other boys had warned me that [REDACTED] MFE stood in his door looking for targets, usually new boys from another house.
79. Sometime later, I found a younger boy bleeding from his ear and crying in a corridor. [REDACTED] MFE had hit the boy on his ear with his strap as the boy was walking past [REDACTED] MFE room. The boy had no idea what he had done wrong. I took the boy to the matron.
80. [REDACTED] MFE supervised our naked showers. There was hot water first, then the water would be really cold. We were forced to stand in the shower and not leave until [REDACTED] MFE said we could. The time would vary, depending on his mood. Any boy who ran out before [REDACTED] MFE gave permission was rounded up by [REDACTED] MFE sometimes using his strap, and forced to stand under the shower for longer. We were all naked. [REDACTED] MFE made it a sort of game, which he enjoyed. It never worried me. I found the cold water a challenge. I tried to be one of the last to leave, to show [REDACTED] MFE he wasn't intimidating me. Other boys nearly passed out under the cold shower.

MFE paced up and down the rows of showers, checking the boys out. I did not think he was perverted, just that he got a kick out of being cruel to kids.

81. At the end of runs, the weakest and least athletic boys would be singled out by MFE and forced to run around the cricket oval ten or more times, whilst the fastest boys were enjoying showers. Some boys would be lying on the ground. One boy lay at MFE feet and prayed to God to save him. MFE was laughing at the boy. Another punishment would be to roll the cricket pitch with a large, heavy roller. Four children would pull it. One boy in our class, who I don't want to name, was regularly picked out for this by MFE. The humiliation was public and other boys would be laughing. MFE picked on boys who were fat and not in his house. Sometimes the housemaster from a different house would retaliate on one of MFE boys. A war would break out, with the boys being used as instruments of combat.

Brother MNS

82. Brother MNS was in his fifties. He was slightly simple. He was born with [REDACTED] and was only about [REDACTED]. Brother MNS told me that he had never aspired to become a monk and had been forced into the Catholic monasteries at a young age. He had been at the Abbey for at least twenty years before I got there in 1961. Brother MNS told me that he was one of the [REDACTED]. He said the [REDACTED] gave him a good Catholic education and as soon as he was about seventeen, he was put in a monastery. I felt sorry for Brother MNS. He was given the most demeaning work at the Abbey. He worked in the kitchen and lavatories. He cleaned up after the monks. He was often covered in smelly cooking grease. In the monastery class system, Brother MNS was at the bottom.
83. Brother MNS would often be seen hanging around at the doors of the school's outside lavatories. He liked to play games with the younger boys. The older boys avoided him due to his being simple and their earlier experiences of him.

84. Brother **MNS** favourite game was to ask a boy to guess his weight by lifting him up. This was done, face to face, by the boy wrapping his arms around Brother **MNS** and lifting Brother **MNS** off the ground a number of times, in quick succession. I was caught out by his game in my early days at the school. Brother **MNS** was not pleasant to be close to and smelled a bit but I thought nothing sinister of him at first.
85. Once, there was a hard object pushing into me from Brother **MNS** groin area. I asked him what it was. Brother **MNS** told me it was his 'penknife'. I talked to other boys and I was informed what his 'penknife' really was. It was his erect penis. Whenever he approached me in the lavatories after this, I made sure not to play any more of his games.
86. One time, Brother **MNS** was outside the lavatories and he said to me that he had been ordered not to come down there anymore. We never saw much of Brother **MNS** after that. When I saw him around the school, I would always say hello to him. The monks did not think it was necessary to warn us about Brother **MNS** although they apparently knew what he got up to around the school lavatories.

*Monk, Name not known*

87. I was about fourteen years old and in my first few weeks at Fort Augustus. We were in class when the teacher, a monk, lost his temper. I can't remember the monk's name. He was angry because the blackboard duster had gone missing. We searched for the duster but it could not be found. A boy near to the front of the class said, "It's not here Father." The monk dragged the boy out from his desk to the front of the class, by the lapels of his jacket. The desk was knocked over.
88. The monk was a big man. He spun the boy around, lifted him up by his jacket, and wiped the blackboard with the boy, as if the boy was the duster. The monk turned the boy upside down and around, so his face was pressed onto the blackboard. He wiped the boy across the board, from left to right and right to left. A line of spittle was smeared across the blackboard each time. The boy's arms flailed around. The

monk dropped the boy on the ground. The boy remained there for a while in a heap, crying.

89. Every one of us in the class was paralysed with fear. The boy, still in tears, went back to his desk, turned it upright and sat down. The boy's face, head and clothes were covered in white chalk. The teacher carried on for the rest of the class as if nothing had happened. We only had one more lesson from this madman. In that lesson, the monk yelled at the top of his voice, threw chalk and a duster, which hit a boy's forehead and cut him. We never saw the monk again after that.

#### **Reporting of abuse at St Augustus Abbey School**

90. We complained to our parents about our cruel treatment at the Abbey school. That was to no avail. My father had other things on his mind. My mother was a devout Catholic who would not believe that men of God would do such things. I do think my mother believed some of what we told her, although she used to dismiss it outright. My mother would say I was making it up or I was a liar. Often there was proof, marks and bruises.
91. When I was around fifteen years old, we all had a private conference with the monk, who later married, who was brought in to lecture us during our religious retreat. The monk told me that nothing would be said of our conversation, it was private. This was the first time anyone at school had taken an interest. I told the monk that I was being unfairly beaten by the monks at school and I'd had enough. He told me to pray for the monks who were beating me so that the beatings would become less painful.

#### **Leaving Fort Augustus Abbey School**

92. I left school in 1964 when I was sixteen and a half years old. I asked my mother if I could leave. I said I had had enough of it and I wanted out. There was no argument. My mother said that was fine.

### **Life after Fort Augustus Abbey School**

93. After school, I did various jobs in the United Kingdom and then I moved abroad. My first years abroad were depressing and I worked in a number of dead end jobs.
94. I started work as a gardener at a factory. I then got a job as an assistant in the factory laboratory. It wasn't long before I became manager of the laboratory. I wanted to become a civil engineer. I studied for four years and obtained a graduate diploma. I became a regional manager for a large multinational company. Later, I worked freelance. At that time there were only four people qualified in my field of expertise in my region, of which I was one. I am now semi-retired and have spent time working on experimental ideas in my field of expertise.

### **Impact**

95. At school, I would often wake up with an anxious knot in my stomach. At times I felt sick from fear. I think I had an ulcer when I left school, I had a nagging pain in my stomach. I never felt safe at school. I was never in fear of another boy, or bullied, it was only the monks who struck fear into us. We knew we were going to be beaten, for the slightest infringement of the rules. My parents would never have carried out the beatings that those brutes did. Those brutes were in loco parentis to us. We lived from day to day, rather than looking ahead. The future was gloomy. Those who had vision and were capable of looking ahead, suffered the most. I hardly knew my brother's when I was at school. We only met in the holidays.



96. When I left school, I turned my back on the Catholic Church. Even today, I feel uneasy and want to get away when I see a priest or monk in their robes. Being near to them makes me uncomfortable.
97. For at least ten years after leaving school, I felt my self-confidence had been reduced. I didn't attribute that to any particular event. I became withdrawn, a recluse, I did not have self-worth and felt I was a failure. I had no aspirations. I felt ashamed for leaving school early. At that time I became a heavy drinker. I had not even tried to get into university. I don't remember anyone in my class at school going to university. When I lived with my parents after school, the pressure to better myself could not have been worse. My father had reached a high level in his work. I felt so out of place and small. I felt I'd let my mother and father down by not performing well at school. There was a wage freeze in the United Kingdom. I decided to leave home to go abroad where my prospects might be better.
98. My relationship with my mother and father was definitely affected by my experiences at Fort Augustus Abbey School. The disbelief that anything had happened to us was very hurtful. When your parents don't believe you, it knocks you round. That's a big thing in any relationship. After a while, you don't want to say too much to your parents because you know what they will say.
99. I felt I had to get away from my friends and the country. Later in life, I felt I could have climbed to greater heights if I had not been sent to that wretched school. I feel I lost fifteen years of my life, not at the school but after leaving. I had to re-group. I had to go and get a degree, with four O' Levels. Luckily in the country I moved to, they didn't know about Scottish education. They thought O' Levels were great. School didn't teach us how to learn. It was all a matter of keeping us in order.
100. Now, I look at the monks as social misfits and gutless bullies. They could hardly survive by themselves in the outside world. They were protected by the church. The monks got pleasure from bullying children who were at their mercy. It was easy for the monks to carry out their brutal activities because we were virtually cut off from the outside world. The monks did not like people who challenged them. They wanted

everybody to be under their command. I challenged the monks and that was my biggest problem. That caused my difficulties. If I had shut up, I probably would have got half the canings.

101. When I had my own children, I didn't want to let them out of my sight. I didn't allow them to go to boarding school.

#### *Treatment and Support*

102. Following an accident which left me with constant back pain, on and off since 1998, I have been treated for anxiety and depression. The treatment has been with medication and cognitive behavioural therapy. I will never know whether my anxiety and depression have anything to do with my treatment at school. I have never felt it was but I might be wrong.

#### **Records**

103. I have never asked for my records from school and I never want to. The records would not be exciting. They would say I was an arrogant boy who challenged the monks all the time.

#### **Lessons to be Learned**

104. I hope there will be some good research into the abuse of children in care and that out of it will come some changes in the law. I think the boarding school system is slowly imploding. Probably in twenty years' time there won't be such a thing. Hopefully there will be a law passed that no monastery should be allowed to run a school.

#### **Other information**

105. The school was undergoing a change whilst I was there, although I didn't realise it at the time. The old guard of monks and teachers had mostly died off. Students pre 1958 wrote glowingly of the school. By 1959, a different style of monk was settling in, overlooked by [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] MFF [REDACTED]. The school had financial difficulties and was not as selective as it had been. The boys were a challenge to control. The school was badly run. The brutality of the monks increased. The blame lies with [REDACTED] MFF [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] MKT [REDACTED] MFF [REDACTED] was known to be a sadist and turned a blind eye to the brutality of the monks. From 1962, monks and priests with questionable backgrounds came to the Abbey. There was a new terror for the boys, paedophilia.

106. As far as I'm aware, every monk who abused me is now dead and so can never be brought to account for what they did to me and the other children. One might ask, what is the purpose of coming forward to the Inquiry? There is purpose. I believe the truth about what happened must be exposed. It is important to send a signal out to others about this unacceptable conduct. This will be a deterrent and provide some sort of redress for the victims. Exposure like this can also help to change our world towards a better place.

107. By my slight contribution, I wish to help towards providing an opportunity for future generations to learn about the nasty practices of the past and to show that such acts of evil are capable of being committed by apparently pious men in positions of trust, right under our noses. I thank the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry for giving me this opportunity to present my statement.

108. 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.

[REDACTED] MMH [REDACTED]

Signed.....

29. 5. 2019

Dated.....