

## Witness Statement of James Stephen Woodhouse

in response to questions contained in letter from Mr Martin Smith dated 1<sup>st</sup> May 2018

I, James Stephen Woodhouse, will say as follows

Place and date of birth: DPA 1933

### Career

- 1957 Assistant Master, Westminster School
- 1962 Head of English Department, Westminster School
- 1963 Under Master and Master of the Queen's Scholars, Westminster School
- 1967 Headmaster, Rugby School
- 1981 Headmaster, Lancing College
- 1993 Retired, Part time work as Director of Independent Schools Information Service Eastern England until 2000

#### 1.1 Rugby School – Connection with Peter Ball

I first met Peter Ball about two years after I went to Rugby. The mother of a Rugby pupil had suggested that he should be invited to come and preach in the Chapel. She had come to know him through his voluntary work for old people in her local area. She explained that he was co-founder with his brother Michael of the small Anglican Order of the Glorious Ascension which they had founded in 1960. She had found him an inspirational priest who lived his faith and had exceptional gifts in communicating with old and young people.

1.2 After consulting the chaplain I invited Peter Ball to preach in the chapel. His sermon, and the way in which he related to the pupils and staff who met him after the service, led to further invitations to come to the School, either to preach or speak at voluntary occasions such as the Lent Lectures. These meetings were attended by large numbers of pupils and staff. I estimate that he visited the School about once every other year.

1.3 Peter Ball stayed in our house on each visit and we were able to see how well he communicated with pupils, always adding something valuable to their talks together. As a visitor he only saw pupils 'one to one' by arrangement with one of the staff, usually the Chaplain or a Housemaster.

1.4 Over this whole period there was no indication, from pupils, parents or staff, that Peter Ball ever misused the time he spent with individual pupils or of a sexual advance being made.

1.5 My friendship with Peter Ball developed over these visits.

1.6 A former Rugby pupil who had read the reports of Peter Ball's trial and imprisonment said to me recently that he and his contemporaries had nothing but good memories of his visits to the School. There had never been any sign of his taking advantage of a pupil sexually. It was his perceptiveness and willingness to listen and talk about subjects which interested them that they appreciated.

## 2.1 Lancing College 1981 – 1993

As a governor Bishop Ball was present at the College each term, staying overnight with one of the housemasters or housemistresses and meeting the staff at supper. He came to preach occasionally and gave less formal talks in the Crypt chapel. He did not prepare pupils for confirmation but met with small groups to listen to and discuss their questions. He never provided spiritual mentorship at all. As at Rugby, a pupil could ask to meet him individually. The chaplain provided a list of these requests and made the arrangements for each meeting.

Bishop Ball was also a former member of Lancing College. Including Governors' meetings, he was probably in the College five or six times a year. His preaching in chapel was appreciated by pupils, parents and staff. There was never at any time any indication from pupils, parents or staff that Peter Ball might have behaved improperly towards any pupil in the College.

2.2 My knowledge of the 'Give a Year to God' Scheme and the Community of Little Brothers and Sisters was very limited. I never visited the Scheme's premises at Litlington or took any part in providing teaching for the Scheme or helping in any way in the running of its activities. I did not encourage any Lancing pupils to become involved in the Scheme. In my letter to Detective Inspector Murdock I said that several ex-Lancing pupils became involved in these Schemes. Since I wrote that letter I have searched my memory and cannot recall any former pupil having joined the 'Give a Year to God' Scheme. Lancing College was not in any sense a recruiting ground for the Schemes at Litlington. The only young people who I recollect joining a course was a group of six former Lancing College pupils, four young men and two young women, who I heard had become members of the Community of Little Brothers and Sisters after leaving Lancing.

2.3 I met some of the members of that group later at various Lancing occasions. They told me that they had enjoyed and benefited from being members of the Community which was based on the principles of St Francis of Assisi and involved committing themselves for three years to a life of singleness, simplicity and humility. The members of that group are thriving and fulfilled both in their work and in their family lives.

2.4 I confirm that I wrote the letter to Detective Inspector Murdock dated 20<sup>th</sup> January 1993 (see ACEO21184, pages 8-9).

2.5 I confirm that by the time of Detective Inspector Murdock's visit I had heard reports of Bishop Ball asking young men to pray naked and/or to engage in self-flagellation or cold showers as part of their spiritual development. I also read press reports of these allegations but I cannot recollect when those press reports first appeared.

2.6 I never heard of any rumours or suggestions that Bishop Ball had made similar requests to boys at Lancing. If I had heard of any such rumours I would have reported the matter immediately to the police.

2.7 When I suggested in my letter to Detective Inspector Murdock that these practices could be easy to misrepresent as being sexual in nature I was referring to the allegations about Bishop Ball's treatment of young men in the Chichester Diocese whom he was training. I was aware that those allegations had been made by more than one individual than just Neil Todd, about whom I knew nothing. I took no action at that time but waited for the outcome of the police enquiries.

2.8 With the knowledge that I now have of Bishop Ball's criminal behaviour, the tone and content of my letter to Detective inspector Murdock in January 1993 would have been completely different. When I wrote that letter I had no reason to believe that Bishop Ball was guilty of the criminal behaviour of which he had been accused. Such behaviour was in total contrast to the way he had to my knowledge behaved towards the pupils in my care at Rugby and Lancing. It seemed to me quite possible that he had been the victim of a false accusation.

2.9 My purpose and intention in writing my letter to Detective Inspector Murdock in January 1993 were to give an accurate picture of Bishop Ball's behaviour in connection with the two schools for which I was responsible.

3.1 It was never the case that self- flagellation or cold showers ever could be seen as an acceptable act of penitence or contrition for pupils at Lancing College whilst I was Headmaster. If I had heard any rumour of this kind I would have reported the matter immediately to the police.

3.2 I wrote to Messrs Mumford, Solicitors to Bishop Ball, stating my knowledge of his connections with Rugby School and Lancing College. This was in the form of a statement a copy of which is enclosed. **ANG000325**

#### Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed

**DPA**

Dated

14<sup>th</sup> June 2018