

S1107

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Statement of: NUNN, ALBAN

Form MG11(T)

Page 1 of 4

WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r27.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5b

Statement of: NUNN, ALBAN

Age if under 18: Over 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18') Occupation:

This statement (consisting of 3 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: ALBAN NUNN

Date: 21/09/2017

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded (supply witness details on rear)

I am a Benedictine Monk at Ealing Abbey, my ecclesiastical, as we say 'religious', name is Alban, my given name is Philip John NUNN. I am originally from Melbourne, Australia, but I have been living in the UK, off and on, since the mid-eighties. In November 1992 I entered Ealing Abbey and was clothed as a novice in January 1993. Between 1995 and 1997 I attended [DPA] University although, as the term time was only about 24 weeks a year, I still spent half of my time at Ealing Abbey. Between 1998 and 1999 I studied at one of our Abbeys in [DPA]

I have been asked about my knowledge of Father Laurence SOPER. Father Laurence was the Abbot when I arrived at the Abbey. It was his intervention that allowed me to join the Abbey, as before that time there was a preference only to accept British citizens as novices. We had a friend in common, Peter ELLIOT, who is an assistant bishop in Melbourne although Bishop ELLIOT played no part in my application process.

My impression of Father Laurence was that he was distant and could be mercurial, showing flashes of anger. You knew about it if he disagreed with you or you had displeased him. He was, however, totally impartial. There were no favourites. My impression is that we were all treated the same.

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In 1999 I was spoken to by one of the teachers at St Benedict's school, Katie RAVENSCROFT. She and some of the other teachers were unhappy about one of the monks, Father David PEARCE, because they were worried that he had been sexually abusing boys at the school. I know that there had been a number of complaints from parents. I told her to collect evidence, anecdotes and documents and to go to the police. Father Andrew HUGHES, Father Thomas STAPLEFORD and I were all very concerned about the way these complaints were being dealt with. My concerns were known by the then headmaster Dr Anthony DACHS.

I have been asked if I remember having a conversation with Katie RAVENSCROFT shortly after Father Laurence resigned as Abbot and left the Abbey, in which I inferred that now that we had a new Abbot the complaints would be dealt with. I do not remember the specific conversation, but it is quite probable that I did say something like that. I felt that the new abbot would be 'a new broom'. It seemed to me that Father Laurence and the monastery council had been more interested in dealing internally with the allegations against David PEARCE, rather than dealing with the problem directly by going to the police. In theory Father Laurence had moved PEARCE out of the school and arranged for him to remain in the Abbey, but he still went into the school whenever he wanted. As bursar he had an office in the school buildings.

There was an incident with a family named [family of RC-A631]. Apparently the [family of RC-A631] family attended a school function and saw PEARCE wandering around amongst the boys. I did not see it, but I was told that Mr [family of RC-A631] punched PEARCE. PEARCE had apparently abused one, or more, of their sons and Father Laurence had a meeting with the family and agreed that they would not make a report to the Police and he would keep PEARCE away from children. I understand the boys themselves did not want Police involvement.

After Father Laurence had left, PEARCE remained and the complaints against him continued. I spoke to the new Abbot, Father Martin about PEARCE and he said, "What can I do, he is my friend." I have to say that Father Martin is now very remorseful about everything. About 2000, Father Philip AUSTEN arranged for a fence and gate to be placed between the Abbey and the school. He and I saw this as sort of symbolic gesture to keep PEARCE out of the school. By this time the English Benedictine Congregation, under the leadership of Abbot President Richard YEO had given PEARCE a job involved with the

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education of young monks. PEARCE cited this as evidence that his superiors did not take the civil action against him and the monastery seriously.

I was so unhappy with the way the complaints against PEARCE had been dealt with that I actually left the Abbey between 2001 and 2003 and became a chaplain in East Anglia. I returned to the Abbey in 2003.

My understanding is that when Father Laurence resigned as Abbot he went to work for the [DPA] [DPA] working with new recruits at a [DPA] outside [DPA]. I believe that he did this for 2 years and then went to Rome. The first issues I heard about were that he was causing problems due to his heavy drinking. Then in 2005 there was talk around the Abbey that the police wanted to talk to Father Laurence about abusing boys at [DPA] Young Offenders Institute. When he was Abbot Father Laurence would often attend [DPA] on occasion he would give boys who had been at [DPA] jobs working around the grounds and in the monastery. Some time later I heard that Father Laurence had disappeared from Rome and that there were now allegations against him relating to boys at St Benedict's.

In 1992 a man named [RC-A614] began visiting the Abbey as he wanted to become a novice. He and I became good friends. I think he would have been in his mid-twenties at the time. As part of the tests undertaken prior to applying to join the Abbey he was sent for a psychological evaluation. This showed that he had anger issues and Father Laurence agreed to pay for continuing therapy, but then suddenly cut the funding. I never found out why the funding was cut. I believe that there were indications that [RC-A614] may have been sexually abused in his childhood.

During one of the terms that I was away at Oxford, [RC-A614] appeared to have a complete break-down and was hospitalised. He is now on medication and under constant supervision. I still see him most weeks. About 3 or 4 years ago [RC-A614] told me that Abbot Laurence had abused him. He said that 'Laurence made me touch him', 'it happened in Laurence's office'. I cannot remember exactly what else he said, but I made a written memo of the disclosure to Father Timothy GORHAM, who is the protection officer at the Abbey. A short time later I was contacted by the Police and spoke to them on the phone.

In the last year [RC-A614] told me that they would not be able to take the matter further [RC-A614] still asks what is going to happen to Father Laurence now.

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Page 4 of 4

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