



This document contains the report produced by Roger Meekings which formed part of the independent Past Cases Review commissioned by the Bishop of Chichester.

The only editing carried out to produce this version is the redaction of information that it is not appropriate to put into the public domain. Otherwise this report is as received from the author.

The initials used in this version are consistent with the usage in the report by Baroness Butler-Sloss which is published in conjunction with this report.

Diocese of Chichester
February 2012.

INDEPENDENT HISTORIC CASES REVIEW ROY COTTON/COLIN PRITCHARD

The purpose of the “Historic Cases Review” carried out in 2008-09 was to identify cases of possible concern that required further examination. The conviction of Rev Colin Pritchard in summer 2008 of offences involving historic abuse led to questions about how earlier allegations, regarding both Pritchard and Cotton, had been dealt with and whether there were lessons to be learnt regarding Diocesan policy and practice.

The Bishop of Chichester commissioned an independent review in February 2009 “of the past decisions and actions of the key Diocesan Staff” with a view to making appropriate recommendations.

Roger Meekings, who undertook the independent review of historic cases in the Diocese, also carried out this Review.

Background

Pritchard was convicted at Northampton Crown Court and imprisoned for offences involving the sexual abuse of young males some 20 years previously.

Some of the abuse was alleged as perpetrated jointly with Cotton.

Cotton had been involved in the alleged abuse of a number of young males, over many years, but he died in 2006 before Northampton Police could bring formal charges against him.

Both priests had been investigated in connection with previous allegations made in 1997, which were investigated by the Sussex Police although no charges were

brought at that time due to a lack of independent or corroborating evidence. However, further information was brought to the attention of the police in Northampton in 2006 when a local man made similar, historic allegations. Contact with Diocesan officers was made separately by two men from 2002 onwards to draw attention to their allegations of historic abuse by Cotton and to seek help.

Whilst there is a general acknowledgement that the known allegations against Cotton are factual these allegations remain untested in a court of law, due to his death. This presents a fundamental difficulty for the known victims in not being able to seek justice for themselves against the person that caused them trauma and distress.

The Review process

The review has inevitably been subject to a number of constraints or limitations.

The Report relies on both documentary records as well as information supplied by individuals and staff. The reliability of recollected information may be more questionable or open to challenge as a number of years have elapsed.

The sudden death of Tony Sellwood, Child Protection Adviser, has meant that an important avenue of direct enquiry has not been possible. The suddenness of his death will have had an impact on the fullness of the records available.

The passage of time has had an impact on the confidence of staff to be accurate in their recollections.

The quality and detail of record keeping has not allowed officers to supplement their recollections or give additional support to their views on what may have occurred and the reasons behind any actions or decisions.

In this context it may not have been easy for staff or others to be exact about when information was first known to them.

The chronology was sent to Bishop Wallace in May 2009 asking for confirmation of its accuracy, in relation to those aspects which involved Bishop Wallace; he confirmed it as accurate.

The report was delivered to Bishop John on 29 May 2009.

The Reviewer was subsequently asked to meet with representatives of the Diocese in November 2009 and asked to consider comments made by Bishop Wallace regarding accuracy. The Reviewer agreed to amend the Report. This is covered in Section 4 on Page 20.

Details of the individuals spoken to and documents seen appear in Appendix 1 and 2.

The Report

The Report looks at the history and issues relevant to both Cotton and Pritchard.

However, the major part of this Report focuses on Cotton; his history and the decisions made in respect of what was known about him.

It will be important for the reader to follow the chronology in relation to Cotton before moving on to the discussion of the findings. It is important for the reader to know the events and what followed before forming a judgement or conclusion.

The chronology gives dates and corresponding events and is also complimented by comments from the Reviewer at significant points.

The Report will identify and explore key stages and key issues arising from the chronology in the section headed 'Discussion' for each of the priests separately.

ROY COTTON CHRONOLOGY

DATE	EVENT	COMMENT
10 April 29	Born Ventnor, Isle of Wight	
	Sandown Secondary Grammar School	
27 May 47	National Service Leading Writer [Educational and Vocational Instruction]	
	Uncertified Teacher St Catherine's Home, Isle of Wight [a Cof E home for children recovering from illness]	
31 Dec 47	Cotton applies for the Ministry	
14 Jan. 48	Positive reference from St Catherine's Home but described as immature.	
11-14 July 49	Attended Selection Conference and was recommended for training	
	Attends Ripon Hall, Oxford	
2.2.51- 12.2.54	Assistant scout master, Oxford	
Feb 54	Abingdon Magistrates Court. Convicted of indecent behaviour with a child. Sentenced to 1 year probation.	<p>There is no third party information to confirm the charges and the nature of the conviction. No one from the College appears to have attended and recorded the outcome.</p> <p>One explanation for this is that Cotton might not have revealed details of his court appearance until after the event.</p> <p>Note that the letter from Scout HQ 24.10.68 refers to the offence as indecent assault on a young boy and states that the record indicates that RC is "a person who may have no connection whatsoever with the Movement."</p> <p>This was about 6 weeks prior to ordination.</p>

16 Mar 54	<p>Letter from Bishop Allen, Principal of Ripon Hall Oxford to CATCM, Westminster:</p> <p>“Right up to the end Cotton maintained that he had done nothing of which he was ashamed... The magistrates found him guilty and gave the minimum sentence that he should be “on probation” for one year.</p> <p>....I have said to him that it need not necessarily prejudice his ordination for all his life...He was in any case a rather weak, immature character”.</p>	<p>In fact, this was not the “minimum” sentence available. Cotton could have received a conditional discharge or a fine. Probation would have been the disposal if the magistrates felt the person required supervision/direction.</p>
1961	<p>Appointed as a Master in an Independent school in Fareham before moving to a school in Church Crookham</p>	
Summer 1961	<p>Reader in Oxford Diocese.</p> <p>Believed to have gone into partnership with Commander Smethwick to start a new Prep school, at Crookham Court, Newbury.</p>	
3 May 66	<p>Letter from Bishop of Portsmouth¹ to Commander Smethwick, Crookham Court.</p> <p>“Roy Cotton and the Vicar of Thatcham came to see me yesterday and I heard the sad story of Roy’s dismissal by you. ...we did discuss the future and particularly in terms of Roy’s ordination.....What I am concerned about is that possibly you have information which I ought to be aware of and I should be grateful if you could write to me about it. I have been aware all the way along of the incident 12 years ago when he was put on probation. As far as I am concerned I would want to write that past off, unless there were good reasons for not doing so.”</p>	<p>No response from Commander Smethwick on the Blue File.</p>

¹ Retired 1975, deceased 1985. - Footnote added during redaction – not in original

<p>3 May 66</p>	<p>Letter from Bishop of Portsmouth to Bishop of Norwich. “RC came to see me...about the possibility of ordination. On looking at the files I see there is a note with “no step to be taken without reference to me” and I have no doubt this reference refers to his appearance in court in 1954.....This is now 12 years ago and as far as I can make out there has been no hint of any further trouble since. I should be grateful if you could let me have a line, not least to clear the decks.”</p>	<p>There is nothing on the current Blue File that refers to this.</p> <p>It does look as if there might have been a ‘hint’ of further trouble [see 4 May 66].</p>
<p>4 May 66</p>	<p>Note by GT [?] [for file with a copy to the Bishop] on Roy Cotton. “He came to see me on May 4th at the Bishop’s suggestion. I found him in a state of considerable distress and tension.....His partner in the school in which he works, Commander Smethwick, has given him notice to leave in July or December, as a result of allegations made or insinuated by boys at the school..... Found him a strange personality, and although it may very well be that the allegations are untrue and unfounded, I think I can sense a little of the atmosphere which caused them to be made. If the Bishop is satisfied he could be ordained, and I understand that Commander Smethwick is prepared to back him, should some reference be made back to the Bishop of Derby who was Principal of his theological college when the first incident occurred which Roy says never took place?.....”</p>	<p>Issue of “allegations made or insinuated by boys at the school”. No record on file that these were identified or investigated.</p> <p>Cotton appears to be denying, on this occasion, that the 1954 incident happened.</p>
<p>5 May 66</p>	<p>Letter from Bishop of Norwich to Bishop of Portsmouth: “I would have thought that if there has been no hint of any further trouble it would be quite in order to consider Roy Cotton for ordination...”</p>	

13 May 66	<p>Letter from Bishop of Portsmouth to Archbishop of Canterbury outlining RC history [including criminal offence] and his repeated requests to be considered for ordination:</p> <p>"...at the time he protested his innocence , and he has done ever since, and in fact from that time has been teaching.....</p> <p>he has been to see me on three occasions. I have seen his partner in the school, the Bishop of Derby, and saw his Principal who was in office, when the alleged offence occurred; the Bishop of Norwich who was concerned with him as an ordinand. And all are agreed that as there has been no indication of any further trouble for the last twelve years, it would be right for him to be considered.....</p> <p>I am not sure whether having been convicted there would need to be a dispensation from you and I would be most grateful for your guidance in this matter...</p> <p>Cotton is a man of considerable ability...and I cannot think that having been so free of any trouble for twelve years that there is a likelihood of there being any problem in the future."</p>	<p>The Principal of the Theological College had become the Bishop of Derby.</p> <p>RC managed to collect a good deal of sympathy from a number of senior clerical sources.</p> <p>Bishop of Portsmouth even goes so far as to put his case to the Archbishop.</p> <p>He also describes RC as a 'man of considerable ability'. This is far from the picture that was apparent even at that time by reference to what is recorded on the file; there were doubts about his 'character'. The offence in 1954 appears to be 'downgraded' or re-constructed as "the alleged offence" and there is emphasis placed on RC's persistent denial that he did anything wrong.</p>
17 May 66	<p>Response from Archbishop [secretary]. The Archbishop "is reassured by what you have said and thinks you would do right to consider ordaining him to a title in the carefully selected parish which you mention."</p>	
2 June 66	<p>Letter from Principal, Theological College, Chichester to Bishop of Portsmouth regarding a meeting with RC. He goes on to say:</p> <p>"...we are happy to take him here for two terms, with a view to ordination at Advent, assuming you are taking responsibility for sponsoring him and that you have cleared his past and that you will square things with the ACCM.....</p> <p>I hope to see him [the Bishop of Derby] in Cuddesdon...and I want to find out why he did not stand up for Cotton in 1953 [something which rather rankled with Cotton]."</p>	<p>There is no evidence that the matter was 'squared' with ACCM.</p>

<p>2 June 66</p>	<p>Letter from +Portsmouth to Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry, ACCM: Expressing the hope that the normal rules can be stretched regarding RC. Past history is explained as is his partnership with Commander Smethwick in a school in Newbury: "Now, alas, news of his previous conviction has caught up and Cmr Smethwick, his partner, has felt obliged to tell him that they must part company. I have had a long talk with Cmr Smethwick and with the Vicar of Thatcham, whom Cotton has been assisting as a Reader, I have talked to +Derby, who was his principal at Rippon Hall and I have seen those who have passed on gossip from this locality, and find no truth whatsoever in the allegations which have been made. I referred it to the Archbishop and...he thinks I should do right to ordain him...to a carefully selected parish. and what I am asking is that he [Cotton] might be excused from coming to a further Selection Conference and be allowed to complete a quiet two to three terms before ordination. My reason for making this request is on pastoral grounds. He has been pretty desperately hurt by the turn of events and I believe it could be wrong for him to have to go over and over the whole story again. I can find no evidence of homosexual tendencies, indeed he has been engaged once and has a prospective girlfriend at the moment. Over these last twelve years he has been taking boys away to the Continent and there has been no breath of suspicion. But I do think it would be really harmful to him if he had to go over the whole business again in a group at a Selection Conference. I hope, therefore, there may be some way in which I may be whitewashed if I simply go ahead."</p>	<p>What the gossip was about Cotton is not explained. Was it the allegations or insinuations from the boys at the school [cf GT above 4 May]. Or was it, as +Portsmouth puts it, news of his previous conviction catching up. It may be more likely to be the former given that + Portsmouth saw "those who passed on the gossip locally" and decided the allegations had no truth.</p>
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8 June 66	Letter from ACCM to Bishop of Portsmouth: Refers to Bishop of Portsmouth's letter of 2 June. ACCM suggests that it should go to the Selection Committee, with an assessment from Dr Backus, psychiatric adviser,	+Portsmouth letter of 2 June not on file.
15 June 66	Response from +Portsmouth to ACCM: accepting the proposal that RC sees Dr Backus but not accepting need for RC to go to Selection Committee and says he will discuss with +Ely.	
17 June 66	Letter from +Portsmouth to ACCM: "I have now been able to talk things over with +Ely. The latter was quite clear that Cotton ought not to be required to meet any members of the Selection Committee; and felt too that unless Cotton himself expressly wished it, he should not be required to see Dr Backus. I am, therefore, sending Cotton to Chichester for two terms, with the proviso that the situation will be reviewed at the end of his first term, and if all goes well I will ordain him at Advent....."	
20 June 66	Letter from ACCM to +Portsmouth: accepting the position but suggesting a medical for RC "so that he does not feel that he is an exception in every respect".	A pleasant enough letter from ACCM but with a heavy barb at the end, which emphasises the unusualness of the situation.
20 June 66	ACCM contacts +Ely about the proposal from +Portsmouth to allow Cotton to bypass the Selection Committee and asking, "if you want this reported to the Selection Committee, or if you think it better that we should say no more about it."	ACCM, clearly concerned, decides to contact +Ely for a 'second opinion'.
24 June 66	Response from +Ely: ".....Of one thing I am quite sure and that is that if +Portsmouth proposes to ordain him, it would be a bad thing for Cotton to tell his story over again with strange people, either at a Board or before Members of the Candidates' Committee. So I think the answer is, we should do nothing further about it."	The concern that an ordinand has previously committed a sexual offence against a young person has become lost in the focus on 'protecting' Cotton. As a result Cotton did not go through the Church's usual route to training and ordination, which would have provided more objective scrutiny and evaluation of the concerns and possible risks.

19 July 66	Letter from Rev Dr Richardson, formerly at Ripon Hall, commending Cotton to +Portsmouth.	
20 July 66	Response from +Portsmouth, grateful for his support and commenting: "He has clearly had a very difficult passage and suffered no end of what I am convinced is evil gossip."	
26 July 66	Letter from Lambeth Palace, John Andrew, to +Portsmouth: "I am revising the names on a certain list and before I put RW Cotton on the list with a 'C' against his name I want to make absolutely certain that he was ordained by you at Trinity or thereabouts."	
26 July 66	Letter from +Portsmouth to Lambeth Palace, John Andrew advising the RC has not yet been ordained and saying: "I suppose it is necessary to put his name on the C list. Perhaps because there has been a court case this is inevitable, but it was over 12 years ago, and I just wonder how long a man has to be in the clear before his name has to go on a list. If it is necessary well and good, but I would wonder."	[Note: The C List was a 'caution' list containing names where some caution should be applied. The category "C" represented the lowest of the levels of concern at that time]. Again, there seems to be a minimising approach. The issue was not that there was a court case but there was a child offence for which he was found guilty.
6 Sep 66	Letter from +Portsmouth to Rev Harry Gilroy, Southsea: "I am so glad to hear that you feel you can offer Roy Cotton a Title at Advent."	
22 Sep 66	Letter from Principal, Theological College, Chichester to +Portsmouth confirming that the first term has been without problem regarding Cotton.	Cotton attends Chichester Theological College at the same time as Pritchard.
15 Dec 66	Letter from +Portsmouth to Principal, Theological College requesting a confidential note on "points which you feel need watching and ways in which, during his post ordination training, he can best be helped".	
19 Dec 66	Response from Principal to +Portsmouth. Two points are identified, concerning Cotton's lack of reading and his poor preaching style.	

14 Mar 67	Letter from Lambeth Palace, John Andrew, to +Portsmouth asking for an update.	
15 Mar 67	<p>Letter from +Portsmouth to Lambeth Palace, John Andrew advising that RC was ordained at Advent and making a 'plea that his name should not be put on that certain list'. He goes on to say:</p> <p>"There was a good deal of doubt, substantiated by the Bishop of Derby who was then his college principal, about the whole case and he has had it as something rather hanging round his neck all these years.</p> <p>I believe it would be right for it to be forgotten and for it to be possible for him to, as it were, make a fresh start with ordination."</p>	<p>Cotton would have been ordained shortly before Christmas 1966.</p> <p>There is no evidence to substantiate doubt on file.</p> <p>No response on file from Lambeth</p>
5 Sep 67	Letter from +Portsmouth to Rev Gilroy, Southsea, requesting a confidential note on RC inviting his honest opinion and "any indication of ways in which he needs further guidance."	
11 Sep 67	<p>Response from Rev Gilroy to +Portsmouth. Overall, his response is a positive one although he starts by saying:</p> <p>"As you know, I had certain reservations when he first came, and these were not dispelled by the incident just after Easter. However, I must confess that I have been much happier since then, and I have had nothing but admiration for the way in which he has coped with the parish during my illness over the past three months."</p>	There is no indication as to the nature of this 'incident'.

<p>24 Oct 68</p>	<p>Letter from R Tanner, Legal Secretary of the Scouting Movement, London, to +Portsmouth as they had received an application for RC to be appointed as Group Scout Leader at St Margaret's Church Group, Eastney, Portsmouth. Mr Tanner notes that RC held Scouters Warrants at Ventnor, IOW, from Nov 1948 to June 1949 and in Oxford from Feb 1951 to Feb 1954. Mr Tanner states that "Whilst a theological student he was convicted of an indecent assault on a young boy at Abingdon in February 1954 and he is noted in the records at this Headquarters as a person who may have no connection whatsoever with the Movement."</p> <p>"This gives rise to a somewhat serious problem and I shall be grateful if you will kindly lend your assistance in this situation by, perhaps, letting the vicar have the necessary information with regard to Mr Cotton's background to enable him to take the correct action so far as the Scouts are concerned."</p>	<p>RC was clearly 'blacklisted' by the scouting movement at the time of the conviction. Their record is that his offence was for indecent assault of a young boy [not indecent behaviour, as the information on the blue file indicates]. RC has been uncompromisingly defined by his criminal behaviour as "a person who may have no connection whatsoever with the Movement."</p>
<p>28 Oct 68</p>	<p>Letter from +Portsmouth to Rev Gilroy re above and saying that the position of the scouts should be accepted.</p>	<p>The tone of the letter suggests that Rev Gilroy was aware of RC's previous history and conviction.</p>
<p>28 Oct 68</p>	<p>Letter from +Portsmouth to R.Tanner, Scouts:</p> <p>"It is, of course, news to me that an application has been made for a Warrant in this case, and I should most certainly and obviously have advised strongly against it. I am afraid his vicar made an error of judgement here, for he has been perfectly well aware of the offence of which Roy Cotton was convicted in 1954, and I explained this situation very fully before Cotton went there as Curate and suggested that he should not be given independent charge where boys were concerned. I have now written to the Vicar saying that of course the Warrant cannot be proceeded with."</p>	

31 Oct 68	Letter from R Tanner, Scouts to +Portsmouth acknowledging above.	
4 Nov 68	<p>Letter from +Portsmouth to R.Tanner, Scouts: asking for re-consideration of whether a Warrant could be given: “...before accepting Cotton as an ordinand I went very carefully indeed into the past and I discovered that all who then had dealings with him had grave doubts of his guilt.....This is now fifteen years ago and there have been no indications of any sort of trouble since then. Cotton himself has been staggered that the matter should have been raised all over again, and, not unnaturally, asks the question ‘am I to be continually dogged by an incident in which I assert my innocence?’..... My simple question is, how long does a doubtful past record dog a man and if on every side those concerned intimately with him are satisfied, does this past history hang over him?”</p>	<p>A sudden change of heart by +Portsmouth. His earlier position was that RC should not be given independent charge of boys and had said that he had advised the Vicar of this at the time of RC’s appointment.</p> <p>It would seem that RC has been effective in pleading his case to the vicar and the +.</p>
11 Nov 68	Letter from R Tanner, Scouts to +Portsmouth acknowledging above and adding “ in our experience after a period of some 60 years our statistics show that there is a possibility of re-occurrence even after a great period of time....” But he agrees to put the matter forward for consideration.	
24 Jan 69	Letter from R Tanner, Scouts to +Portsmouth advising that the Committee has decided that RC can be granted a Leader Permit.	
4 May 71	Letter from +Chichester to +Portsmouth asking for his comments on Cotton’s suitability for the parish of Harting.	

5 May 71	Letter from +Portsmouth to +Chichester responding, "I think I could wholeheartedly commend him." Nevertheless +Portsmouth goes on to outline RC's conviction, for what he describes as 'indecent exposure in front of boys'. He also states that "I am clear in my own mind that Roy was more sinned against than sinning" but that "there has been no sign of trouble whatsoever".	Diocese of Chichester was made aware of RC conviction.
2 June 71	Letter from +Portsmouth to Major-General Hawes urging the acceptance of Cotton as the Vicar of Harting. "I simply want to say that the charge made against him in 1953 has, I believe, been proved a false one. He pleaded guilty at the time to spare the boys concerned having to appear in court. There has been no breath of suspicion of trouble since...."	This seems quite extraordinary. It is a statement that cannot be supported. Cotton's persistent cry of 'foul' has had a powerful impact.
24 June 71	Letter from Cotton to +Portsmouth advising that he has been offered the living in Harting [to 1974].	
28 Jun 71	Letter from +Portsmouth to Cotton; acknowledging above.	
		No material on blue file from 1971 until letter 28.10.98 from Cotton advising of his retirement. No material on Area Bishop's file until 8 March 1999.
1974-76	Priest in charge, Eastbourne St Andrew.	Nothing on blue file about this appointment
1976-84	Vicar, Eastbourne St Andrew.	Nothing on blue file about this appointment
1984-99	Rector at Brede with Udimore	Nothing on blue file about this appointment
1 Dec 1997	<i>Arrested at the rectory and taken to Hastings Police station and charged with sexually abusing a minor between 1976 and 1983. Released on police bail.</i>	<i>No details of this event or investigation on blue file. No details/investigation/discussion on Safeguarding file. No details in papers forwarded from +Wallace for the blue file from his personal record.</i>

12/97	Note by Janet Hind in 'Day Book': Discussion with a Sussex Police officer re allegation made against RC made by 2 boys- indecency while on holiday- approx 15 years ago [St Andrews Eastbourne].	
1997-99	Nicholas Reade [then Archdeacon] recalls that, at some point in this period, Cotton advised him that there had been an incident or misunderstanding many years previously, which resulted in his ordination 'being held up'. Cotton told him that on an occasion when he was an organist, and a young person was assisting him, he was on the stool in front of the organ and his flies were undone. Cotton said that this resulted in a complaint being made. Nicholas Reade was not told by Cotton that he had appeared in court and had a conviction for a sex offence. Nicholas Reade confirmed that the police did not make any contact with him concerning their investigation.	
1998	Before the police concluded their investigation +Wallace had a 2 nd meeting with RC, which arose from +Wallace's concerns about RC and the current allegations. RC advised +Wallace of a historical allegation involving a young person and refers to it as a 'false accusation'.	This information was not shared with the Child Protection Adviser.
28 Oct 1998	Letter from Cotton to +Wallace notifying of his intention to resign with effect from 31 Jan 1999. The letter also states "I trust that I shall be granted a Licence to officiate generally in the diocese when needs demand."	
2 Nov 1998	Letter from +Wallace to Cotton acknowledging his letter of 28 Oct and advising "As regards the Licence to officiate when you have retired, I would be grateful if you would apply for this when you have retired and have a new address. I shall be very happy to grant you this."	There was an ongoing police investigation so the question of future PTO should have been approached cautiously until the outcome was known and discussed with the Child Protection Adviser. It was the Child Protection Adviser's understanding that Cotton would simply be retiring and PTO was not being considered.

2 Nov 1998	<p>Letter from +Eric to Cotton acknowledging his letter of 28 Oct and stating:</p> <p>“I have been sorry to hear from the Bishop and Archdeacon of the troubles you have been having with the police. I am well aware of what a nuisance they can be in the delay of coming to any conclusion of clearing things completely and I hope they will end enquiries about you very soon. Meanwhile, I accept your resignation as from 31 January. I take it that you will be getting the form of resignation from the registry and signing it. It should be countersigned by the Bishop of Lewes as you are in his area. As regards permission to officiate in the future, if you are going to remain resident in the Lewes area, it would be best to get it from the Bishop of Lewes, otherwise from the Bishop of Horsham or myself according to where you are intending to retire to.”</p>	
21 Dec 98	<p>Note from JH in ‘Day Book’: “TC from a Sussex Police officer re Roy Cotton, He now needs to speak to Rev Colin Pritchard re possible offence [not so serious]. Address and tel. no. given. Bp Wallace contacted.”</p>	
31 Jan 1999	Cotton retires.	By this time Cotton regarded as a sick man. Nicholas Reade recalls visiting him in hospital in Hastings in 1999.
15 Feb 99	<p>Note from JH in ‘Day Book’: Copy letter from police re Colin Pritchard stopping investigation</p>	
8 Mar 1999	<p>Letter from Archdeacon Nicholas Reade to JH, Child Protection Adviser, notifying that the police have concluded their investigation and are not taking further action.</p>	

13 Mar 99	<p><i>This letter obtained from PJ and not held on any Diocese files.</i></p> <p><i>Letter from a Sussex Police officer to PJ advising that the CPS have made the decision to proceed no further with his allegations against Cotton and Pritchard. The advice is given that "The record of this investigation and the statements made by you and your brother will be kept on file. This information will be invaluable to us should either of these men try to involve themselves with children in the future."</i></p>	<p><i>It is of particular note in this letter that the matters will remain "on file" and does not point to a full conclusion to the matter at this point.</i></p> <p><i>In the event, the police lost or destroyed the file containing the record of the investigation.</i></p>
10 May 1999	Letter from Cotton to +Wallace requesting PTO.	
17 May 1999	PTO issued by +Wallace	
Sep 2000	Article published in magazine 'People in Eastbourne' [PIE] identifying Cotton as a sexual abuser and detailing allegations against him.	
11 Sep 2000	Letter from +Wallace to Cotton: [assume regarding above]: "So sorry about this article which is in a free paper in <i>Alldays</i> near your old parish. I thought you'd better hear about this from a friend rather than an enemy."	
3 Apr 2001	Letter from +Wallace to Cotton asking him to complete <i>Protection for Children and Young People Confidential Declaration Form</i> and DOH form.	

<p>10 May 2001</p>	<p>Cotton returns documents to +Wallace and notifies of his previous conviction and also the arrest in 1997: “During February 1954 I was charged at Abingdon Magistrates Court with indecent exposure in the presence of a child. This was said to have taken place in the organ loft of a village church. I was found guilty and placed on probation for one year.</p> <p>On Dec 1st 1997 I was arrested at the rectory and the whole house was searched and turned upside down.: then taken to Hastings Station where I was charged with sexual abuse with a minor at times during the years 1976-83. I was released on police bail and given a date for the charge to be officially made. The date was postponed at least 5 times, sometimes with only an hour’s notice in all taking over a period of 15-16 months. At that time, I received a letter from the police telling me that the CPS were not going to proceed with the case because enough evidence was not clearly available.”</p>	<p>This information was not shared with the Child Protection Adviser.</p>
<p>29 May 2001</p>	<p>DOH return [POCALs] states that Cotton’s name does not appear on Protection of Children Act List or List 99.</p>	

	<p>Years 2002 onwards</p>	<p>JH ceased her role as Child Protection Adviser in connection with 'cases' in April 2001. Tony Sellwood commenced in the Child Protection Adviser role in May 2002.</p> <p>Record of handover discussion includes a list of cases with a comment: "1997 Roy Cotton, now retired. Investigated by police for offences against boys, no charges put, Police still concerned, living in Sedlescombe. See papers." [note: "papers' above are assumed to refer to letter from Nicholas Reade to JH, 8 March 1999; there are no other 'papers' and JH does not recall any other documents].</p>
<p>6 Jun 2002</p>	<p>e-mail and 2 attachments from PJ to +Wallace. One attachment was a copy of the Sep/Oct 2000 edition of 'People in Eastbourne' [PIE] identifying Cotton as an abusing priest. The other attachment was a 12 page diary/account from PJ with his graphic story of being abused by Cotton from age 10 [1976] to age 17/18. The account also includes the police enquiry in 1997 and his disappointment at CPS dropping the case. It also identifies his brother as having been a victim. He states that he was motivated to write to +Wallace as a result of a programme on BBC2 on paedophiles and an encounter with a local man who had told him that Cotton had sexually abused him. He ends by saying: "I would like to know what the church has done about this, I was told that the police had approached the church but they were not very forthcoming. I feel that the church should have investigated this and if they have done I would like to know what the outcome was."</p>	

<p>Undated Jun 2002</p>	<p>Letter from +Wallace to PJ, stating that this is following discussion with the Diocesan Child Protection Advisers. “I am deeply concerned for you and I realise how events and media presentations will cause the events you have recorded to come to the front of your mind.”</p> <p>In respect of the other man who says he had been abused PJ is advised: “When you next see this young man please tell him to go to the police and tell them of his experience. He has made a very serious allegation of a criminal nature.” ...“Clearly his experiences may allow the police to reconsider your earlier allegation.”</p> <p>“...The recollection of the Diocesan Child Protection Adviser at the time is that the police did involve her and that she attended meetings with the police.</p>	<p>JH has no recollection of a discussion and TS states in later correspondence in July 05: “You will remember that I first became involved in Rev Cotton when I dealt with a young man called C.” Stephen Barber, Oxford Diocese, provided some ‘cover’ to Chichester. He does not recall any contact on this case.</p> <p>JH was never invited to any meeting with the police.</p>
<p>Early 2003</p>	<p>C makes a visit [‘unarranged/unannounced’] to +Wallace to talk about his experience of abuse by Cotton.</p>	<p>This would appear to have been referred to the Child Protection Adviser, who appears to have met C. [I use the word ‘appears’ as C has no recollection of meeting TS]</p>
<p>Feb 2003</p>	<p>Meeting between TS and C</p>	<p>No record of this meeting or action to be taken. No evidence of investigation.</p>
<p>Feb 2003</p>	<p>Letter from TS to C following above meeting. “Thank you for telling me about the difficult time you had as an adolescent and of your experiences with Cotton..... I can confirm that I am pleased to arrange and pay for 6 sessions of counselling..... Hearing of the way you were targeted and so badly treated does help to gain an understanding of the level of skill and cunning used by child sex offenders to target children..... If more people would speak out, as you have done, then perhaps there would be even greater efforts made, at all levels of society, to ensure the likes of Cotton do not have access to children.”</p>	<p>The letter was not sent to the correct address and was not received.</p> <p>Should the Diocese have reviewed its handling of the PJ case and offered counselling to him and his brother?</p>

30 June 05	<p>e-mail from PJ to +Wallace with attachments[not included on file, possibly the previous attachments]. PJ says that his contact has been generated as a result of recent coverage of a high profile child abuse case similar to his own.</p> <p>He goes on to say: "Whilst I appreciate that Fr Cotton as an individual was largely responsible for what happened I do hold the Church responsible at least in part due to the collusion between Rev Cotton and other Anglican [and Catholic] priests including Peter Ball. I also feel that the church, even at that time, had a duty of care towards choir boys and girls.....I also feel that the church were irresponsible in allowing Fr Cotton to take large groups of children abroad when he was the only responsible adult, I remember some parents being concerned at the time."</p>	
5 July 05	Letter from +Wallace to TS with copies of above correspondence and asking for a draft reply.	
July 05	<p>Draft response from TS to +Wallace. [undated]</p> <p>TS states "You will remember that I first became involved in Rev Cotton when I dealt with a young man called C. PJ and C had very similar narratives concerning Rev Cotton."</p>	<p>This would suggest that TS was not aware of, or did not recall at the time, the previous allegations of PJ</p> <p>However, it should also be noted that the police investigation concerning Cotton in 1999 was discussed with TS in the 'handover' from the previous Child Protection Adviser, JH, in 2002.</p> <p>Bishop Wallace confirmed, as part of this review, that he did not discuss with TS at any time, the 1954 conviction of Cotton.</p>

11 July 05	<p>Letter from +Wallace to PJ. “There is no doubt in my mind that you experienced abuse from Rev Cotton.”</p> <p>“I do not recall any specific reference to P Ball in your previous correspondence. Were the police aware of circumstances regarding this man?”</p> <p>“I also wish to make it clear that if you feel that it would be helpful to discuss the circumstances with the police because you feel that there may be other people or incidents that were not spoken of before then I should remind you that you always have the right....and I would encourage you in this right....to make a further complaint to the police.”</p> <p>“When you have considered the content of this letter please contact me again so that we can discuss how best to provide you with appropriate support and assistance for the future.”</p>	<p>PJ is advised/encouraged to make a further complaint to the police.</p>
	PJ does not respond [until 3 May 2007].	
Sep 06	Roy Cotton dies.	
Jan 07	Tony Sellwood dies.	
3 May 07	<p>e-mail from PJ to +Wallace, thanking +Wallace for the letter of 2005 and apologising for not responding.</p> <p>PJ refers to recent convictions of Halliday, choirmaster, that has brought his feelings back to the surface. He also refers to the conviction of Rev David Smith on 26 April 07: “the similarities of this case to my own are remarkable and almost unbelievable”.</p> <p>“All I ever wanted was an admission from him [Cotton] of what he did to me and others. I do feel a great sense of injustice.....”</p> <p>“As I have said before I do feel that the church must accept some of the responsibility for these cases or at least the consequences of them.”</p>	<p>This was acknowledged on 14 May 07.</p> <p>There will have been caution in providing a fuller response at this point as a consequence of the ongoing police investigations and pending prosecution.</p>
Summer 08	Court proceedings concerning Colin Pritchard, found guilty and imprisoned.	

DISCUSSION REGARDING ROY COTTON

1. ORDINATION

The reader will have been struck firstly by the way in which Cotton gained access to the priesthood after having been convicted of a sexual offence against a young person.

Cotton was clearly successful at persuading senior figures to support his case for ordination. He was persistent in arguing his cause and, over time, minimised the nature of the incident, denied responsibility for committing it, argued that he pleaded guilty to protect a young person from the need to give evidence, or claimed it was a misunderstanding.

His supporters eventually argued the view that he was “more sinned against than sinner” and that it was “right it to be forgotten” and that there could be “a fresh start with ordination”.

These matters relating to Cotton’s ordination were dealt with some 40 years ago and this does need to be kept in mind.

However, there was total reliance on Cotton’s version of events and no checking of the ‘source material’ by going to the court records. It seems odd that no member of staff from the theological college attended court, heard the verdict and sentence and placed a brief report of Cotton’s file. The absence of this allowed Cotton to create a rather different story, which was not challenged. It may be that Cotton did not advise the Theological College staff of his court appearance until after the conviction.

What is more difficult to understand [and provide a reasonable explanation of] is why Cotton’s case for ordination was promoted in the way it was; such that he was ‘pushed through’ to Theological College the second time without being expected to comply with the usual route of the selection panel and the medical examination. The result was that he was protected from the scrutiny that prospective ordinands would usually receive.

2. SCOUTING AUTHORISATION

The Scout movement had put a bar on Cotton holding a warrant ever again following his 1954 conviction. Again, Cotton must have persisted in persuading his Diocesan supporters to lobby the Scouting Movement, and they eventually agreed to re-licence Cotton.

This was a significant step as it resulted in Cotton receiving ‘authorised’ and unsupervised access to young people in organised groups. It enabled him to be regarded as an authority figure and a person ‘of trust’ by parents.

Many of the situations Cotton’s victims talk about or relate to youth activities that Cotton helped organised or led, including abroad.

3. SUSSEX POLICE INVESTIGATION 1997-99

It appears that Sussex Police investigation was carried out in a way that had little involvement with Diocesan officers. Whilst this period does pre-date the development of good practice guidelines and policies for 'working together', it is still barely 12 years ago and there were opportunities for dialogue and communication with the Diocese Child Protection Adviser by the Police.

Sussex Police are reported not to have been aware that Cotton had a previous conviction for a sexual offence. Various reasons have been given for this; the most likely is that there was an error in entering the details of Cotton's conviction on the national criminal database some time after his court appearance in 1954.

The lack of significant involvement with the Diocese will have led Diocesan officers to conclude, at the end of the police investigation, that not only was there insufficient evidence to proceed to a prosecution but also no real information of concern to provide to the Diocese.

4. KNOWLEDGE OF COTTON'S [1954] CONVICTION IN 1998-99

The Reviewer has explored in some depth the question of who knew what and when regarding Cotton's 1954 conviction [at the time of, and following, Sussex Police investigation 1997-99].

The Reviewer tends to believe that the following is the most likely position:

- JH, Child Protection Adviser, was not aware of Cotton's conviction until she read with Diocesan 'blue' file in 2006 with a Northampton Police Officer.
- There is no evidence that TS, Child Protection Adviser, had knowledge of the conviction judging by his written comments to Bishop Wallace and the fact that Bishop Wallace has confirmed that he did not speak to TS about the conviction.
- Archdeacon Reade had understood from Cotton in 1998-9 that he had a complaint made against him that delayed his ordination. Cotton evidently did not share all the facts and did not reveal that he was convicted.
- Bishop Wallace had advised the Reviewer that Cotton had told him of his conviction in 1954 in his second meeting with him in 1998. Bishop Wallace was asked to check the accuracy of the chronology and accepted the account [that RC had told him in 1998 of his conviction]. However, later, Bishop Wallace wished to revise the account in the chronology to say that RC had spoken to him about this historical matter as an allegation and not as a conviction.
- It is not established that the 1954 conviction was shared with Diocesan officers.

However, the information given by Cotton about the disclosure of a historic allegation should have been shared formally with the Child Protection Adviser, at that time.

This may [or may not] have prompted a request for a senior officer to review the "Blue" file [which would have revealed that it was not an allegation but a conviction].

The consequence was that the knowledge of Cotton's past was not subject to wider or professional scrutiny.

The knowledge of Cotton's past, at the time of Sussex Police investigation may possibly have led to a review or investigation within the Diocese in spite of the fact that Cotton was nearly 70 and about to retire.

The likelihood is also that the Child Protection Adviser would have had cause to contact the Police to share and compare information. This could have had an impact on the Sussex Police investigation.

A possible explanation of why this information was not shared may have been a view that this allegation was in the very distant past and not of current relevance and that Cotton was due to be leaving his role as a parish priest and was elderly and said to be a sick man. Arguably, this approach may have been led more by pastoral concerns for Cotton at that time.

In the event that was the case, it was an approach that neglected to fully consider wider responsibilities and duties on the church and its duty to possible victims.

5. PTO ISSUED in 1999

Permission to officiate [PTO] was given to Cotton shortly after his retirement. This comes as a surprise [to a layperson] given the recent police investigation and the knowledge of the previous allegation. Whilst it may be argued that Cotton, at this age and reported to be in poor health, was unlikely to pose any risk, it is still a questionable assumption, and one which was not discussed with the Child Protection Adviser.

The Child Protection Adviser, at that time JH, had understood that Cotton was simply to retire and that there was no question of PTO. She had not been made aware of the 'self-reported' allegation against Cotton.

The Reviewer learnt from a member of St Saviour's and St Peter's church in Eastbourne that after his retirement Cotton attended that church and made a 'nuisance' of himself with the choir boys which led to a number of them leaving or wanting to leave the choir and the church. As a result of complaints, the churchwardens dealt with Cotton's behaviour appropriately. The fact that Cotton had PTO in such a situation will have served to give him a sense of authority and status.

The decision to issue PTO in these circumstances raises issues about the balance between possible risk and [pastoral] support/endorsement to a long serving priest.

A more cautious approach together with discussion with the Safeguarding Adviser of all matters of concern that involve safeguarding, including those of a historical nature, would have ensured a safer and more defensible outcome to the wider 'community'.

6. THE DISCLOSURE OF COTTON'S CONVICTION IN 2001

Cotton wrote to Bishop Wallace in 2001 formally disclosing his 1954 conviction as part of Diocesan checks that were in the process of being routinely undertaken.

This was a 'blemished' disclosure and should have been passed to the Child Protection Adviser.

There is no evidence that this was shared with the Child Protection Adviser.

It has been suggested that there was a high degree of administrative confusion in the Diocese at that time and that this written disclosure was sent to the Bishop's Palace but was possibly lost or misplaced. This cannot be ruled out as a possibility.

However, the seriousness of this new information, that Cotton had been convicted of an offence against a minor, was extremely significant and required robust action.

In addition, here was a priest who now appears to have lied to his Bishop about a most serious matter and had misled his Bishop.

There are now two matters that would have been of serious concern to a Bishop; firstly, the need to deal with a matter that was self-reported as a false allegation turning out to be a conviction; and secondly, the fact that the priest concerned has lied or misled his Bishop.

Neither of these matters appears from the records and reports to have been dealt with and instead Cotton is issued with PTO.

7. DEALING WITH 'CORROBORATING' INFORMATION IN 2003

C met with Bishop Wallace in early 2003 and he appears also to have met with TS in February 2003.

At these meetings he disclosed a similar account of abuse at the hands of Cotton as related by PJ.

TS sent a letter to C following his meeting acknowledging "the difficult time you had as an adolescent and of your experiences with Cotton" and goes on to offer sessions of counselling.

This letter does not suggest to C that, as an adult, he could/should report the matter to the Police, although whether this was said in the meeting is clearly not known. However, at some point, C did report the matter to the police and was interviewed and advised that the police could take no action, as Cotton was ill.

C's memory of events and sequences at this difficult time in his life is understandably not exact. For example, he has no recollection of TS or of him coming to his house.

It is possible that C spoke with the police prior to contacting the Diocese and the unwillingness of the police to take the matter further prompted C to raise matters with the Diocese.

TS appears not to make the link with the previous investigation of Cotton in 1997-98 or his conviction or the previous detailed letter from PJ in June 2002.

As a Child Protection Adviser it would be likely that he would immediately see that the account of C now provided corroborating evidence alongside that of PJ

concerning Cotton's abuse of young people. In such circumstances it would be reasonable that the Child Protection Adviser would report this [collection of information] to the police in person as well as suggesting that the victim does so.

On the basis of the information available to the Reviewer, there is a case for believing that, in his work with C, TS did not take into account the past investigation of Cotton or his conviction or PJ's correspondence in 2002.

The 'handover meeting' between Tony Sellwood and Janet Hind referred to the previous police enquiry about Cotton. It appears quite probable that this information was not filed or held by TS in a systematic way that would allow the information to become accessible in the event that further concerns emerged. No safeguarding file on Cotton existed at this time.

In July 2005 TS wrote to Bishop Wallace [after being sent a copy of PJ's letter of 30 June 2005 to Bishop Wallace] stating: "You will remember that I first became involved in Rev Cotton when I dealt with a young man called C. PJ and C had very similar narratives concerning Rev Cotton."

Bishop Wallace confirmed to the Reviewer that he did not have any discussion with TS about Cotton's previous conviction although indicated that TS had access to the Area files and Diocesan files.

There is no evidence that TS knew of the past conviction of Cotton and he appears not to make the connection with the 1997-99 investigation [previously identified in the 'handover meeting'] when he dealt with C in February 2003. The consequence of this was that C's allegations were dealt with by TS as a 'stand-alone' case of abuse rather than part of a wider set of concerns.

Bishop Wallace stated to the Reviewer that he did not discuss Cotton's past history with TS at any time.

Bishop Wallace took the view that the material was available to the Child Protection Adviser in the Area file and the Diocesan 'blue' file.

However, it would be likely that if the Child Protection Adviser had the full history of Cotton and was confronted by the information from C he would raise this as a serious concern. The fact that he did not suggests that he did not have this full background information in dealing with C in 2003 and PJ's letter in 2005.

There were 2 or 3 possible files that may have held information on Cotton. It seems less likely, in the view of the Reviewer, that the Child Protection Adviser would ask Bishop Wallace for access to the Bishop's Area file. It would be more likely that the Child Protection Adviser would have a working assumption that the Bishop would have shared key information of safeguarding relevance.

The Diocesan 'blue' file could, in theory, have been accessed and it would have held details of the 1954 conviction and the letter from Nicholas Reade stating that the police were taking no further action in 1999. It is highly likely that this file was not accessed in 2003 in view of the Child Protection Adviser's later comments. The national policy at that time was that only the Bishop and Bishop's Chaplain should have access to the Diocesan files. This protocol was reviewed nationally in 2004 and more discretion was allowed.

There had not been an 'open' culture of access to Diocesan files and this may have created a working tendency not to seek access to such files.

At that time there was no 'safeguarding' file.

Bishop Wallace assumed that the Child Protection Adviser had the full information [the conviction and the 1998 police investigation], but, with hindsight, this appears not to have been the case. There does not appear to have been a full discussion between the two officers about the emerging issues.

What was the impact? It is known that C did report the matter to the police who felt they could take no further action.

It should not be assumed that, in making that decision, the police were able to make the link to their previous investigation in 1997-98 and they were probably still unaware that Cotton had a criminal record for sexual abuse. The police were understood to have 'lost' their files in relation to the previous investigation or destroyed them.

However, if the Diocesan Child Protection Adviser had been in a position to present Sussex Police with the range of information that was available to Diocesan officers it is hard to see how Sussex Police could take no action when Northampton Police were later able to succeed with a prosecution.

By coming forward to the Diocese, C presented, unknown to him, corroborating evidence of abuse by Cotton, which would have been crucial in relation to the previous investigation and of critical value in looking again at the investigation, including in relation to Colin Pritchard.

The letter from a Sussex Police officer to PJ had advised that the CPS made the decision to proceed no further with his allegations against Cotton and Pritchard. The advice is given that "The record of this investigation and the statements made by you and your brother will be kept on file. This information will be invaluable to us should either of these men try to involve themselves with children in the future." This was a statement that the matters would remain on file and would be re-activated in the event of other material of concern becoming available.

This corroborating information would have lent credence to concerns about not only Cotton but also Pritchard.

Clearly, from the perspective of the victims concerned, this will be seen as a lost opportunity.

8. RESPONDING TO PJ IN 2005

PJ wrote to Bishop Wallace in June 2005.

Bishop Wallace asked the Child Protection Adviser to draft a response and it was at this stage that the Child Protection Adviser appears to make the connection with other historical allegations from C.

The Child Protection Adviser writes to Bishop Wallace: "You will remember that I first became involved in Rev Cotton when I dealt with a young man called C. PJ and C had very similar narratives concerning Rev Cotton."

This is left as an observation. There is no evident response or any further reference on file. No other action related to this observation is recorded on file.

Bishop Wallace has confirmed that he did not discuss Cotton's conviction with the Child Protection Adviser at any time.

It does not appear that enquiries could have been made of the Diocesan 'blue file' and it is probable that the Child Protection Adviser remained unaware of Cotton's conviction.

However, even without the knowledge of Cotton's conviction, it is perhaps surprising that no action followed when the Child Protection Adviser made the connection between C and PJ's similar allegations.

There is no record that the Child Protection Adviser spoke to the relevant Area Bishop to determine what to do.

It is, therefore, more likely than not, that the prevailing view in looking at this matter would have been to address the needs for counselling for the victims as the perpetrator was now regarded as very sick as well as elderly.

Arguably, this appears to have been a similar judgement to that made by the police in response to C.

9. RESPONDING TO VICTIMS

C was offered sessions of counselling after his contact with the Child Protection Adviser in 2003. It is unfortunate that the letter confirming this to him does not appear to have been delivered even though the address was only slightly incorrect.

PJ was not offered counselling when he wrote in 2002.

His letter does not appear on a Diocesan file for that period so it is possible that it may not have been shared with the Diocesan Child Protection Adviser, who, it has to be noted, only came into post at the same time the letter was sent [i.e. June 2002].

PJ contacted Bishop Wallace again in June 2005 to share his concerns about his abuse from Cotton. Bishop Wallace responds on 11 July 2005 and offers PJ the opportunity to "contact me again so that we can discuss how best to provide you with appropriate support and assistance for the future."

At that point PJ did not feel able to respond and does not make contact again until May 2007. There is no record of a response or acknowledgement to this contact from PJ and it was at this time that police enquiries/court proceedings with Pritchard were underway, although Cotton had died in September 2006.

10. OTHER MATTERS

Questions have been raised by at least one victim about whether other priests who were involved in his abuse could be identified or whether matters of concern had been noted at the time his abuse by Cotton was occurring.

The Reviewer spoke to a number of other persons who were mentioned by victims as possibly being able to give further information or who might have had concerns at the time. None of those contacted were able to identify any specific safeguarding concerns relating to Cotton's role as priest in Eastbourne.

None of the above persons were aware of any concerns drawn to the attention of the Diocese.

COLIN IVOR PRITCHARD

CHRONOLOGY

Date	Event	Comment
4 May 44	Born	
1965	Teacher training: College of St Mark and St John, London	
1966	Theological College, Chichester	At the same time as Cotton.
1969-72	Asst Curate St Mary, Kettering, Peterborough	
21 Sep 69	Ordained deacon	
11 Jun 70	Ordained priest	
1972-74	Chaplain, Clayesmore School, Blandford, Dorset	
1974-77	Asst Chaplain, Ellesmere College, Shropshire	
1977-80	Asst Curate, Duston	
1980-89	Vicar, St Andrew Wellingborough	
1989-01	Rector, Sedlescombe	
25 Jul 96	Letter from a parishioner to +Ian Cundy; referring to an incident in which CP lost his temper with a child during a confirmation class and threw her confirmation folder across the room.	
1997/8	Arrested	
11 Feb 99	Letter from Police notifying that he does not need to answer police bail on 15.02.99 as police are taking no further action against him..	
15 Feb 99	Letter from CP to JH, Child Protection Officer, enclosing letter of 11.02.99 from police and stating that he has discussed this with +Wallace and Archdeacon Nicholas Reade.	
2001	Vicar, St Barnabas Bexhill and chaplain, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust	

18 May 06	Completes CDF. Encloses details of previous police enquiry and letter from police dated 11.02.99.	
4 Oct 06	e-mail from Archdeacon Jones to Bishop Wallace notifying that Pritchard has been signed off for 3 months by his GP for stress.	
Late 2006	Handwritten notes made by Tony Sellwood recording a telephone call from Northampton Police notifying of Pritchard's arrested regarding an alleged child offence in Wellingborough in 1980's.	
Jan 07	Tony Sellwood dies.	
		<p>Early 2007 JH provides assistance in covering some of the safeguarding work in the Diocese.</p> <p>She contacted Northants Police, read the Diocese file, discussed matters with Bishop Wallace and recalls she was advised that Pritchard had retired and did not have PTO.</p> <p>In those circumstances JH did not have to consider the issue of suspension.</p>
16 Jan 07	Pritchard retires. Applies for PTO.	
1 Feb 07	PTO issued	
5 July 07	Letter from Bishop Wallace's PA to JH, Child Protection Adviser: "As promised, enclosed are the PTO documents relating to Colin Pritchard, which I found this week in a separate PTO file. I apologise for this oversight."	
6 Sep 07	Handover meeting between JH and SH; which identifies Pritchard as currently under police investigation for possible allegations of historic abuse. Subject to police bail and due to return to Northampton police station on 4.10.07.	

12 Sep 07	Letter from +Wallace suspending him from priestly duties, on the advice of Diocesan Child Protection Adviser.	
4 Oct 07	Pritchard formally charged by police with conspiring with Roy Cotton to carry out acts of indecent assault on boys under the age of 16.	
18 Oct 07	Formal agreement made.	
27 Jul 08	Northampton Crown Court: Pritchard pleads guilty to 4 counts of indecent assault on a child and 3 counts of gross indecency on a child. The offences are reported to have taken place between 1979 and 1983 and to have involved two victims, aged between 12 and 15 years.	
27 Aug 08	Letter from +John Hind to Archbishop of Canterbury, requesting that Pritchard's name be included on the Archbishop's list and that he be prohibited for life from exercising any priestly ministry.	

DISCUSSION REGARDING COLIN PRITCHARD

11. BACKGROUND ISSUES

- i. There appears nothing remarkable in Pritchard's chronology that is of note or would be a reasonable cause for concern regarding Pritchard's known behaviour. Unlike Cotton, he had no prior conviction for sexual or any other offences.
- ii. Enquiries by Bishop Frank among Pritchard's former colleagues and acquaintances in Northamptonshire have not revealed any indications of untoward behaviour known to them.
- iii. Comments from a Northants priest indicate that Pritchard was injured in a bad road accident in late 1980's and it is reported that 'his behaviour changed' following this event. Others have also referred to this.
- iv. Bishop Ian Cundy knew Pritchard [as Bishop of Lewes 1992-96] and remembers him as a 'tortured soul' but was not aware of any untoward behaviour.

12. ISSUING OF PTO IN FEBRUARY 2007 AND SUSPENSION IN SEPTEMBER 2007.

During late 2006, according to handwritten notes made by Child Protection Adviser, Tony Sellwood, Pritchard was arrested for offences against a child. This was notified to the Diocese by Northants Police who were pursuing the investigation.

It would be unusual for the Child Protection Adviser not to inform the Area Bishop immediately.

It is of concern, therefore, that PTO was issued to Pritchard in February 2007. There was an ongoing police investigation in relation to offences against a child [and for the second time in Pritchard's career as a priest].

The context for the Diocese would have been complicated and difficult at this time due to TS's unexpected death in January 2007.

Nevertheless, the opinion of the Reviewer is that PTO should not have been issued in circumstances involving an ongoing police enquiry and where there had been a previous police enquiry for similar allegations of sexual abuse.

The eventual suspension of Pritchard's PTO by Bishop Wallace in September 2007 was 'late in the day': "I have been advised by the new child protection officer that I need to suspend you from all priestly ministerial activity, pending the outcome of the current police investigation, which appears to be nearing a conclusion".

The way in which PTO was issued and later suspended does not fully appear to reflect the level of seriousness that was required. That is not to suggest that there were children at risk as a result but the actions or lack of action portrays the church as not taking a responsible position.

13. CONCLUSIONS

- 1) Cotton's chronology of how he came to be ordained and also how he was authorised as a scout leader is fraught with concerns and questions. It was Cotton's dogged persistence and his repeated and convincing lies about the 1954 offence that persuaded senior officers to put him forward to complete his ministerial training and receive ordination. Cotton's success in this was due to the passage of time since the offence, the senior officers minimising the seriousness of his offence and the actions of senior officers to prevent Cotton's application being scrutinised in the standard way. Current church procedures regarding ordinands provide confidence that this would not be repeated. The appointment of Safeguarding Advisers in each Diocese and the establishment of safeguarding policies and procedure by the church have been important changes in the last 10 years.
- 2) Statement of policies in that period:
 - 1995; updated 1997; updated 1999: House of Bishops Policy on Child Protection stated:
 - [5] All allegations of abuse will be taken seriously.
 - [6] The Church of England will collaborate fully with the statutory and voluntary agencies concerned with child abuse. It will not conduct investigations on its own."
 - [section 23] A person who receives such a report from an adult [concerning historic abuse] must take steps to ensure that the Bishop's representative is informed. He or she will inform the Bishop. The person making the allegation may have particular needs for counselling and support.
 - These policies are repeated in Diocesan policy 2002 and national policy in 2004.
 - January 2002 Diocese of Chichester policy "The Care and Protection of Children" stated:
 - 'A person convicted of or who has accepted a caution for an offence against a child will be subject to an individual agreement defining attendance at worship and other church activities.'
 - "It is Diocesan policy that no-one who has been convicted or who has accepted a caution for a sexual offence against a child will be permitted to work, in a paid or unpaid position which could bring them into contact with children, nor can they be part of mixed-age activities [for example choir, servers, bell-ringers] run by the church.
 - A person convicted of or who has accepted a caution for any other offence against a child or for whom there are unresolved serious allegations outstanding will only be allowed to work with children or mixed-age activities with the express agreement of the Bishop and incumbent following consultation with the Diocesan Child Protection Adviser."
 - 2004 House of Bishops Policy "Protecting all God's children".

- [P1.3] “The pastoral care of the person who has been abused should be a priority.”

It should be noted that the policies tend to focus primarily on addressing risk for children currently rather than dealing with historic allegations. Therefore, the guidance tends to focus on whether an accused person is working with children and young people or engaged in mixed group activities and how that should be dealt with. In Cotton’s case [and latterly in Pritchard’s case] he was elderly and retired [or about to retire] and did not function as a priest in a parish. However, the issuing of PTO to both retired priests would have placed them in unsupervised positions of authority and trust in the church.

- 3) Errors appear to have been made as a result of assumptions made about what knowledge was held by other Diocesan officers. There have been instances where procedures have not been adhered to in terms of sharing information.

There are four critical points where that information should have been shared or discussed:

1999 : the self-reported, historical allegation against Cotton during or after the police investigation;

2001 : when Cotton made his written disclosure, which should have been both forwarded to the Child Protection Adviser as well as discussed;

2003 : when C provided corroborating evidence of abuse by Cotton [the Area Bishop, at that time, appears to have been the only officer with knowledge of a prior conviction];

2005 : when the Child Protection Adviser wrote to the Area Bishop noting the connection between the two stories from C and PJ.

The information of the conviction was held on a Diocesan file. However, even by 2005 the culture that frowned on access to such files by other than Bishops or Bishop’s Chaplains had not really moved on. It is entirely possible that in 2005 the Child Protection Adviser had yet to develop a working practice that would include access to Diocesan files. It is likely that this was also the case in 2003.

The fact that information is held, or may be held, on a Diocesan file does not mean that responsibility is removed in some way from any officer who has significant information from sharing it with colleagues [who have a duty in respect of child protection issues] or from reassuring themselves that such information has been taken account of in reaching decisions or taking action. The fact that no adverse information had been communicated to the Child Protection Adviser over a period of years could have led the Child Protection Adviser to take the view that there were no additional issues in the past to be taken in to account.

- 4) The responsibility owed to the victims could be perceived to have been adversely affected by the way information was dealt with. There were

opportunities, at different times, when the knowledge of past events should have led to that information being shared with the Child Protection Adviser [and the police]. The information held about Cotton's allegation was significant: the 1997-99 investigation, the self-disclosure in 2001 of RC offence, the allegations of PJ and subsequently C. Consideration should have been given to some of the information being drawn to the attention of the police. The context was an emerging picture of systematic, historic abuse of more than one young person by at least one priest [corroborated by two unrelated individuals and an additional, related third person] and possibly organised abuse as more than one priest was named and part of the previous police investigation.

The victims were effectively denied the opportunity of being believed, in a meaningful sense, and denied the opportunity of 'timely' justice. PJ spent many years trying to get the church [and Sussex Police] to accept his allegations and respond with timely action and recognition of his abuse.

- 5) The issuing of PTO to both retired priests is a concern; perhaps more in the way it can be perceived by others both within and outside of the parish and church. PTO was issued to Cotton when he was known to have the 1954 conviction and a police investigation had recently been concluded but it was felt that he was elderly, sick and consequently not a risk. It was not discussed with the Child Protection Adviser. Pritchard had been previously investigated by the Police, with Cotton, and a further police investigation was in progress concerning serious child offences. The perception that is created is that these issues were of minimal or no relevance in reaching the decisions to issue PTO.
- 6) Access to records and recording has been an issue that has been noted in the Review. It could be debatable as to whether the 1997-99 police investigation should have led to separate safeguarding files being created on Cotton and Pritchard. This would be current practice even though the investigation led to no prosecution. If a safeguarding file had been created it may have given a greater likelihood to Tony Sellwood becoming aware of the past history [of the police investigation] when dealing with C in 2003 and PJ in 2005. Tony Sellwood did not appear to have a reliable system for identifying cases where previous concerns had been raised. It is now established beyond doubt that the Child Protection Adviser should have access to the Diocesan files, subject to the usual protocols. The safeguarding files should be co-located with the Diocesan files as a means of ensuring continuity of record and completeness of record.
- 7) There is an issue about how judgements are most appropriately reached concerning whether [historical] allegations are to be believed in circumstances when a complaint does not or cannot [as in the Cotton case] proceed to court. Current multi-agency working with 'strategy meetings' will enable a focus to be maintained on addressing such matters in many situations. However, there may be some cases where this is not possible. It would have been helpful if there had been a mechanism within the Diocese to consider formally the allegations against Cotton in order to determine whether they are more likely than not to be correct [on the balance of probability]. This

might be best achieved through the Diocesan Child Protection Management Group who would examine the evidence and reports and make a finding to the Diocesan Bishop, together with any relevant recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Bishop of Chichester should consider how best to provide the victims access to the findings and outcomes of the Review. It is hoped that as much as possible can be shared although it is recognised that this may create other tensions.
2. The failure to share significant information appropriately, in respect of safeguarding issues, features strongly in this review. There appear to have been major difficulties in communication and recording. This has had a significant impact on the victims who were seeking justice. An apology to the victims is appropriate.
3. The Bishop of Chichester should consider whether the failure to share information appropriately is a matter that can be addressed effectively with further training [including the need to ensure a clearer understanding of risk and responsibility] and whether a programme to regularly review information sharing between Diocesan officers will ensure that the difficulties identified in this review are unlikely to be repeated.
4. Training of senior staff in the Diocese should also include the 'management of allegations', handling the multiple responsibilities of the Diocese in relation to allegations against priests [responsibilities to the alleged victim and family, the priest and family, and members of the parish]; understanding the impact of abuse on victims and their families.
5. The Diocesan Child Protection Management Group should be established as soon as possible and, among its tasks, should consider significant allegations against priests which do not/can not proceed to court, or where a case is not proven, in order to make a finding on the allegation [on the balance of probability] and report to the Bishop with recommendations.
6. Where an allegation against a priest of an offence against a child or young person is taken forward to a Police investigation, following the multi-agency strategy meeting the Diocesan Child Protection Adviser and the appropriate Archdeacon should meet with the Diocesan Bishop or Bishop's Chaplain in order to clarify actions that should be taken forward in the diocese. A similar meeting should take place at the conclusion of the police investigation or court case in order to ensure full consideration of the issues and co-ordination of actions required.
7. The safeguarding files should be co-located with the Diocesan files as a means of ensuring continuity of record and completeness of record.

8. Consideration should be given to whether the national policy [and Diocesan policy, on which it is based] adequately provides guidance for dealing with historic allegations concerning priests who are retired or coming up to retirement. Current policy tends to focus on risk to children where alleged perpetrator's have contact with children or engage in mixed age group activities. The role of a retired priest with PTO may not clearly come within this definition but they will be in a position of trust and authority in the church and their suitability to continue to perform this role will need to be carefully considered.

ROGER MEEKINGS, INDEPENDENT REVIEWER

29th May 09

Updated 6 November 2009

Further revised 16 December 2009

Published by the Diocese of Chichester February 2012, redacted as stated above.

Appendix 1

Persons contacted as part of the Review

The Revd Canon Ian Gibson, Episcopal Vicar for Ministry Canon Treasurer and Senior Chaplain to the Bishop

The Rt Revd Wallace Benn, Bishop of Lewes

The Rt Revd Nicholas Reade, Bishop of Blackburn, previously Archdeacon, Lewes and Hastings

Shirley Hosgood, Child Protection Adviser

Janet Hind, formerly Child Protection Adviser to Chichester Diocese

PJ

C

Appendix 2

Documents reviewed or accessed

Diocesan [blue] file

Copies of Area Bishop's papers

Correspondence from PJ

Papers relating to Colin Pritchard

Comments on Roger Meekings' Recommendations and Criticisms by Elizabeth Butler-Sloss

Roger Meekings (RM) was invited to carry out an independent review of the past decisions and actions of the key Diocesan staff and to make recommendations. He reviewed a number of historic cases in the Diocese without, as far as I am aware, any criticism. He was also asked to carry out a separate review of the two priests Roy Cotton (RC) and Colin Pritchard (CP) which he presented on the 29th May 2009 and which he updated and revised on the 6th November 2009 and the 16th December 2009. These comments upon the latest RM review, dated 16th December 2009 should be read in conjunction with my own observations throughout my review.

It may be helpful if I set out my approach to the assessment of the evidence which I received, both from RM's review and other information I was given. Where I had evidence which pointed one way and there was nothing to contradict it, I accepted it. Where there was a conflict of evidence as, for instance, over knowledge of the 1954 conviction, I sought to check the probabilities before reaching a conclusion. Where the evidence was uncertain and I was unable to resolve it, I did not come to a conclusion. I have based my comments and criticisms upon the evidence I had before me. I applied throughout the appropriate standard of proof in civil matters, the balance of probabilities. The criminal standard of proof is not appropriate to apply in civil matters.

The RM review of RC and CP is divided into the background, the review process, the chronology of RC, discussion regarding RC at pages 20 to 28; the chronology of CP, discussion regarding CP at pages 31 and 32 and conclusions at pages 32 to 35 and

recommendations 35 to 36. In addition RM makes comments throughout the chronology of each priest which he has set out in careful detail.

I am grateful to RM for comments on the draft I sent him. I have largely relied on his chronology save where I have evidence to the contrary and I agree with many of his recommendations which I shall incorporate in mine. I believe however that I have had the opportunity to see documents which may not have been available to him, those documents and discussions I have had about them have, I hope, given me a clearer picture of the events and actions of those involved in dealing with the consequences of the abuse committed by these two priests.

My general conclusion about the review of RM is that it is careful and detailed. As he pointed out, the tragic death of TS in January 2007 left a considerable gap in the information available. The death of RC before he could be put on trial for the abuse he clearly committed also reduced the volume of information about his activities and contributed to the difficulties in painting a clear picture of events. There is also a paucity of written records at every level of those engaged in child protection during that period within the Diocese. RM was looking at events which had taken place several years before and he felt that the reliability of recollected information might be open to challenge. It has been clear to me also that, not surprisingly, not everyone whom I have interviewed has had a clear memory of all the issues I raised with them. NR told me that RM did not get in touch with him, but he has clearly forgotten a telephone conversation RM told me he had with NR on the 17th March 2009. NR has given me helpful information. Where the information is not available, contradictory or not clear, RM has, however, made assumptions and come to

some conclusions which do not seem to me to be based on the available evidence. These assumptions and conclusions have made his review, in part at least, unreliable. He has also made comments and expressed criticisms, some of which I consider to be based on guesswork rather than on the available facts and which, in my view, are unjustified.

I turn now to a detailed consideration of his final review.

1. The chronology of Roy Cotton

RM has made comments about the earlier period of RC's life before he came to Chichester in 1971 which I do not consider necessary to review although I entirely agree with him. It is clear that RC should never have been accepted for ordination. The unfortunate correspondence in May 1971 between BpP and BpC did give BpC the information about the 1954 conviction although, as RM points out, there was also an extraordinary letter from BpP to the patron of the living to which RC was appointed that the charge was a false one and that RC pleaded guilty to spare the boys concerned.

RM points out that, apart from the 1954 conviction, there appears to be nothing in the Blue File about RC from his arrival in June 1971, through his various appointments, his arrest in December 1997 until his retirement in January 1999. There is nothing to show whether in 1971 the then Bishop of Chichester shared the fact of the 1954 conviction with anyone else in the Diocese.

RM also points out that the arrest in December 1997 is not recorded in a child protection file which, I believe, did not exist at the time. A discussion about the allegations between JH and a police officer of the Sussex police was recorded in JH's Day Book.

The issue of the PTO on the 17th May 1999 was referred to by RM as being issued on the basis that there appeared to be insufficient justification to refuse, but he also set out the 1998 letter from EC to RC which, in my view, assumed that a grant would be made of a PTO.

On the 10th May 2001 WB, for the first time, was told by RC of his 1954 conviction. RM is critical that he did not tell the CPA, JH. According to WB he sent the information to the Palace and I have no reason to disbelieve that information. I shall deal below with not sharing information with the CPA.

I shall now look at numbered paragraphs in RM's final review starting at heading (3)

"Sussex Police Investigation 1997-99"

I agree with RM's criticism of the Sussex Police for destroying the RC file after the police letter to PJ stating the file would be retained. From the evidence of Sussex Police it was their practice at the time to destroy files relating to historical allegations after 3 years, in the absence of further evidence. They were then hampered in their investigation of C, which, instead of linking with PJ, they treated as an independent investigation. In my view their failure to find out about RC's 1954 conviction which would have been likely to set alarm bells ringing within the Diocese, was a major contribution to the failure to deal properly with RC immediately after his arrest in 1997. At that time they also did not have the policy of discussion with the Diocesan CPA which they have more recently adopted.

Under RM's heading (4), "Knowledge of Cotton's [1954] Conviction in 1998-99", as far as I can ascertain, no-one in the Diocese in 1998-9 knew of the 1954 conviction. Only EC had the

opportunity to find out in the Blue File. For the reasons I have set out in my review, I am satisfied on the balance of probabilities that WB did not know about the 1954 conviction until RC completed the documents in 2001. WB is recorded by RM as saying that he did know about the 1954 conviction before 2001 but later retracted it. In the partial transcript of the meeting with PJ in August 2008 he told PJ that NR had told him about the conviction in 1998. I accept NR's account to me that he did not know and did not tell WB. WB did know about the organ stool incident, both from NR and from RC himself. The Sussex Police either did not check the national database or it was not on the database. But they told me they did not know either. I am uncertain whether WB did tell TS, when he became CPA, about the conviction but I am satisfied that WB kept TS much more closely informed than he did with JH and SH. I do not agree with RM's assessment of the likely situation. Since there was no knowledge of the conviction in 1998-9 there was no information to share within the Diocese and his criticisms at page 22 and page 23 of his review are not justified.

RM is critical about WB not sharing the information about the arrest of RC with the CPA, JH. JH told me that, after she learnt about the arrest from a police officer, she was in touch with WB as I set out above. Although in theory WB should have informed JH this was at an early stage of the Diocesan child protection policy which only came in September 1997 and was not yet bedded in. The arrest was discussed at senior staff meetings and WB certainly spoke about it to EC.

Under RM's heading (5) "PTO issued in 1999" his conclusion that WB knew in 1998-9 about the conviction has, understandably coloured his conclusions on the subsequent issues, in particular the grant of the PTO. In 1999 EC was the only person, apart from the Sussex Police, with the opportunity to know about the conviction. He and WB had the same

information about the allegations. The police investigation was closed and, as I have said in my review, the proper procedure for dealing with historic abuse allegations not pursued by the police was not clearly understood. With hindsight WB should have informed JH of the grant of the PTO, but this was at an early stage in the understanding of the role of the CPA. I agree in general with RM in his concluding paragraph under heading (5).

Under heading (6) "The Disclosure of Cotton's Conviction in 2001" RM had clearly overlooked that there was no CPA in post between JH leaving in April 2001 and TS taking up the post in May 2002 and child protection issues were dealt with the CPA of Oxford. The disclosure was in May 2001. It appeared to me that the implied suggestion at page 23 was that the blemished disclosure was probably not sent by WB to the Palace although RM told me that he was not suggesting whether it was or was not sent. The evidence that I have from WB, and none to the contrary, is that RC's documents were sent to the Palace. Consequently in the last paragraph of page 23 RM made assumptions which were not based on evidence and were, in my view, unjust to WB.

It was undoubtedly true that RC had lied to his Bishop but he had retired, was ill and in a nursing home and it was believed that he could do no harm. As I have said above, it is surprising that WB did not suspend RC when in 2001 he had the facts of the conviction from RC. WB told me that, after discussion with NR, they felt it was unnecessary to stop RC taking Eucharist in the nursing home where he was resident but imposed stringent conditions. That was an inadequate step to deal with the situation set out by RM. Immediate suspension would have met the robust action suggested by RM. I fail to understand the point RM makes in the final paragraph of heading (6) that "instead Cotton is issued with a

PTO". The PTO was of course issued in 1999 and the issue of criticism in 2001 was the failure to remove it.

Heading (7) is "Dealing with 'Corroborating' Information in 2003" and it would appear that RM was uncertain whether C had gone to the police before he met TS. As C had gone to the police there was no question of TS reporting to the police. In addition TS was, according to his emails, in touch with the police throughout this period. WB told me that he shared information about RC with TS. Whether or not TS knew about the conviction, I am satisfied that TS knew about the arrest of RC in 1997. AS RM himself points out at page 16, at the handover between JH and himself in 2002, the case of RC was discussed. TS also knew about the email from PJ to WB in June 2002. I agree with RM that TS failed to make the connection between PJ and C. I am satisfied that on the evidence available to me, TS had the relevant information to enable him to make that connection of corroborating evidence in the PJ and C cases. I do not agree with the surmises and assumptions of RM on pages 24 and 25. The failure of TS to make the connection cannot, on the evidence I have seen, be a matter of criticism of anyone other than himself. It was unfortunate that in 2003 the Blue File was not open to the CPA and there was no safeguarding file.

The Sussex Police also failed to make the connection between the accounts of PJ and C or recognise the degree of corroboration. But since they took the view that RC was by then too ill and too vulnerable, the use of this additional evidence was probably academic. RM's comments on pages 24 and 25 do not seem to me to add anything useful to the story , other than to point out as TS did the impact on the victims of a failure to deal properly with the allegations they had made.

Heading (8) is “Responding to Victim B in 2005”

I understand from WB and from TS’s emails, WB and TS did discuss the RC case and the information from the two victims who came forward.

The discussion under this heading largely repeats earlier observations.

Heading (9) is “Responding to Victims”. As I understand it, C was offered sessions of counselling by TS during their meeting, and the letter which went astray was only confirmation of that offer. WB told me that he discussed the email from PJ in June 2002 and his response over the telephone with TS. I accept that evidence.

RM raises 2 issues in relation to CP in a heading “Issuing of PTO in February 2007 and Suspension in September 2007.

As I understand WB was by January 2007 aware of the re-arrest of CP. I have set out my conclusions on the grant of the PTO by WB and agree with RM that it should not have been granted and when, 5 months later it became known that it had been granted, it should then have been immediately suspended. The blame for the failure to suspend the PTO prior to the arrival of SH lies at the door of several people, clergy and lay and I have set out my conclusions in my review of CP above. I do not understand the reference by RM to the final suspension by WB in his letter of the 12th September, as ‘being late in the day’. As I set out in my review, according to SH, WB readily agreed to suspend CP and did so immediately. The point of the letter was clear and couched in appropriate terms by a Bishop to a priest, bearing in mind that at that time CP had not yet been prosecuted let alone convicted.

I agree with RM that across the Diocese the arrest of CP was not treated with sufficient seriousness but I consider the portrayal of the Church as not taking a responsible position is over harsh. Certainly from July 2007 steps were taken to ensure the protection of children from this priest, although, in my view, they did not send the correct message to the Diocese. When SH gave the appropriate advice in September, the necessary step was taken immediately.

In his conclusions at pages 32 to 35, RM helpfully sets out the context of the policies of the House of Bishops and of the Diocese of Chichester. He points out that the policies tended to focus primarily on addressing risk for children rather than dealing with historic allegations. He makes various points in his conclusions which repeat those he had made earlier and with which I have already dealt above. But I must repeat that he is mistaken in his assertion at paragraph 5 of his conclusions that RC's PTO was granted by WB with knowledge of his conviction. I have found that when RC was granted a PTO in 1999, no-one appears to have known about his conviction and only the Sussex Police and the Diocesan Bishop had the opportunity to have access to that information. I do not, therefore, agree with his conclusion at paragraph 5. The way in which the PTO to CP was granted was negligent in that there was no consideration whatever of the propriety of granting it, but the manner of issuing it did not knowingly disregard the continuing criminal investigation.

RM has made helpful observations about record keeping and how best for the Diocese to consider past allegations of abuse.

Finally and, in my view, the most important of all his conclusions, he makes the very pertinent point about the effect upon victims who have come forward to give their accounts of abuse suffered by them at the hands of priests within the Diocese. As he says 'the victims were effectively denied the opportunity of being believed in a meaningful sense and denied the opportunity of 'timely' justice. PJ spent many years trying to get the Church [and Sussex Police] to accept his allegations and respond with timely action and recognition of his abuse.'

Elizabeth Butler-Sloss
Thursday, 19 May 2011