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Prep school paedophiles allowed to avoid justice

More than 30 boys were abused over decades

Andrew Norfolk
Chief Investigative Reporter

Paedophile teachers turned one of England's leading prep schools into a child-abuse factory for two decades but escaped justice for ten years because a judge decided that it was unfair to put one of them on trial, it can be revealed.

Peter Wright, the headmaster of Caldicott School in Buckinghamshire, was at the centre of a web that ensnared more than 30 boys.

Yesterday the 83-year-old was convicted of multiple sex offences against pupils at the school, which was attended by Nick Clegg, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Andrew Strauss, the former England cricket captain.

Wright, who taught at Caldicott for 41 years and was headmaster from 1968

school's top table with his two 13-year-old head boys at his side.

Mr Clegg said yesterday that he was "shocked and appalled by the gross betrayal and violation of childhood innocence shown to have taken place".

He added: "These reports will disturb everyone, but most especially those, like myself, who were pupils at the school and were entirely unaware that such abuse was taking place."

"I can only imagine the devastating impact that such abuse must have had on the young boys who were affected. My heart goes out to them."

Six former members of staff — one a close friend of Wright and all but two given jobs at Caldicott by him — were linked to the systematic abuse of pupils at the school from 1959 to 1979.

Four have been convicted of numerous sex crimes against 22 boys, while one was acquitted after a retrial and one is dead. At least two of the convicted teachers committed offences against boys at another two prep schools.

Boys were routinely abused in their beds, in baths, in teachers' bedrooms and on school trips. Wright, described by a former head of Radley College as "the finest prep school headmaster of his generation", usually targeted boys in their final two years at the school who were stars of the 1st XV rugby team.

This newspaper has seen evidence that when one Caldicott teacher was exposed during Wright's headship and admitted abusing at least five boys, the headmaster tried to cover up the scandal and ordered another teacher to lie to the Department for Education after the abuser confided in him.

He also assured the father of a boy, Continued on page 7, col 5

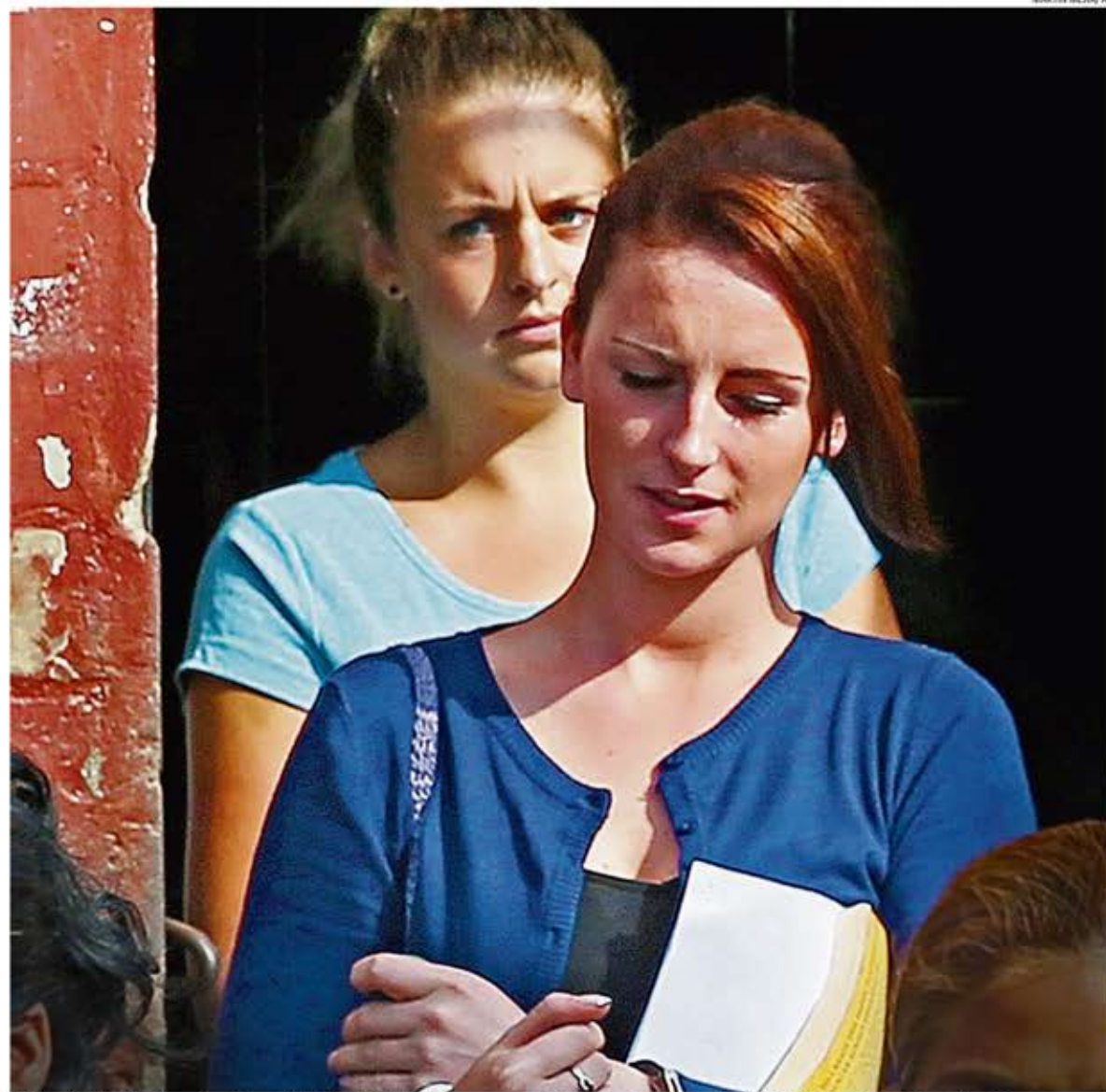
Model school that hid a dark heart of depravity

News, page 6, 7

until 1993, was first charged with abusing boys in his care in 2003 but the prosecution was blocked after a hearing at which it was argued that a trial would "resurrect ghosts of the past that are best left undisturbed".

The elite boarding school, for children aged 7 to 13, has annual fees of £20,000 and sends pupils to some of the country's leading independent schools.

An ex-pupil who was joint head boy with Mr Clegg in 1980 has told *The Times* of regularly being touched improperly by the headmaster during meals. Wright sat at the head of the



Michaela McCollum, front, and Melissa Reid, who were caught trying to smuggle £1.5 million of cocaine out of Peru, were sentenced to six years and eight months in jail yesterday after pleading guilty to trafficking. Irish-born McCollum left the courthouse in Lima carrying a copy of a self-help book called *Secrets About Life Every Woman Should Know*. News, page 5

Islam threat to Christians, says Charles

Ruth Gledhill Religion Correspondent

Bridges between Christianity and Islam are being destroyed amid growing intimidation, recriminations and persecution, the Prince of Wales has warned.

In an intervention that centred on the plight of Christians in the Middle East, Prince Charles said that the relationship between the faiths had reached crisis point and called for an end to the "ignorance and misunderstanding" which he said he has spent decades trying to dispel. "It seems to me

that we cannot ignore the fact that Christians in the Middle East are, increasingly, being deliberately attacked by fundamentalist Islamist militants. Christianity was, literally, born in the Middle East and we must not forget our Middle Eastern brothers and sisters in Christ.

"For 20 years, I have tried to build bridges between Islam and Christianity and to dispel ignorance and misunderstanding. The point though, surely, is that we have now reached a crisis where the bridges are rapidly being deliberately destroyed by those with a

vested interest in doing so, and this is achieved through intimidation, false accusation and organised persecution, including to Christian communities in the Middle East at the present time."

The Prince was addressing Middle Eastern faith leaders as well as the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London at Clarence House, his London home, after a day spent visiting the Coptic and Syrian Orthodox communities in Hertfordshire and London.

He said that he had for some time Continued on page 2

IN THE NEWS

Fracking expansion

Communities across almost half of the country face the prospect of fracking after the Government outlined plans to invite companies to explore for shale gas. News, page 2

Britain's drone war

Reaper drone aircraft armed with 500lb bombs and Hellfire missiles are being "flown" by operators based in a metal cabin at an RAF base in rural Lincolnshire. News, page 9

Heathrow growth

A third runway at Heathrow or a second at Gatwick are the "most credible" options for airport expansion to stave off a feared capacity crunch by 2030. News, pages 14, 15

'Votes for murderers'

Rapists and murderers nearing the end of their sentences would be allowed to vote in elections under plans to be outlined by a parliamentary committee. News, page 21

Rebuke for Osborne

George Osborne will be rebuked by the National Audit Office for claiming that he sold a substantial stake in Lloyds Banking Group at a profit. Business, page 39

