

DPA

20 October 2015

Sir Alan Reid, GCVO
Keeper of the Privy Purse
Buckingham Palace
London
SW1A 1AA

Dear Sir Alan

I understand that you will be able to assist me with an enquiry concerning the Royal Victorian Order.

David Hubert Boothby Chesshyre was Rouge Croix Pursuivant (1970–8), Chester Herald (1978–95), Honorary Genealogist to the Royal Victorian Order (1987–2010), Secretary of the Order of the Garter (1988–2003), Registrar of the College of Arms (1992–2000), Norroy and Ulster King of Arms (1995–7), and Clarenceux King of Arms (1997–2010). In recognition of the personal way in which he had served The Queen, Her Majesty was graciously pleased to appoint Mr Chesshyre to be a Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order on 11 June 1988 and to promote him to be a Commander of the Order on 31 December 2003. Mr Chesshyre was also awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Silver and Golden Jubilee Medals.

On 3 October 2012 the Metropolitan Police Service received an allegation that Mr Chesshyre had committed historical child sexual abuse offences. That allegation resulted in a trial which was held between 5 and 14 October 2015 at Snaresbrook Crown Court before Her Honour Judge Paneth. Because Mr Chesshyre was found to be unfit to plead, the Crown Prosecution Service proceeded with a trial of the facts. When a trial of this kind takes place the jury is asked to find whether the defendant did or did not do the act charged in each count on the indictment. The jury is required to make this finding applying the same standard of proof used in a normal criminal trial, i.e. beyond reasonable doubt. The jury sitting at Snaresbrook found unanimously that between [DPA] 1995 and [DPA] 1998 Mr Chesshyre had done two offences of indecent assault. The victim of these offences was a boy who was at the time of the offences aged between 13 and 15 years. Both of these offences were specimen counts representing a larger number of similar offences committed during the period described on the indictment. The judge ordered that one further count of indecent assault should lie on file.

The offences which Mr Chesshyre committed involved a number of abuses of the several capacities in which he was employed in the service of The Queen. Mr Chesshyre first met his victim at [DPA] Cathedral, where they sang together in the choir. Mr Chesshyre and his victim began to become close when the boy attended a heraldry group which Mr Chesshyre provided for choristers during Sunday lunchtimes. Mr Chesshyre encouraged his victim's interest in heraldry. For example, he gave him books about heraldry and paid for his membership of the Heraldry Society and for his subscription to the journal *The Coat of Arms*. Mr Chesshyre entertained his victim and his family at the College of Arms, where they watched the Lord Mayor's Show from his rooms. Mr Chesshyre later entertained his victim at the College of Arms on many further occasions, sometimes alone and sometimes with his family. When his victim visited the College of Arms alone Mr Chesshyre allowed him to see Garter House and the Record Room. Mr Chesshyre procured from the Board of Green Cloth tickets allowing his victim, with other [DPA] Cathedral choristers and their families, to view the Trooping the Colour

procession from the forecourt of Buckingham Palace. On several occasions between 1993 and 2002 Mr Chesshyre gave his victim, with his family and/or friends, tickets to visit Windsor Castle on Garter Day, either to watch the procession from the castle grounds or to attend the service inside St George's Chapel. On separate occasions Mr Chesshyre also took his victim to Windsor Castle while he was carrying out business on behalf of the Order of the Garter and to The Queen's Chapel of the Savoy while he was carrying out business on behalf of the Royal Victorian Order. Mr Chesshyre and his victim also visited Thomas Fattorini Ltd in Birmingham, and I believe that this visit was made in connection with the production of stall plates for the Royal Victorian Order. Mr Chesshyre introduced his victim to several of his colleagues and clients, including Sedley Andrus (to have lunch at his house in Kent in 1994), the Rt Hon. Sir Edward Heath (to have tea at Arundells in 1995), Sir Walter Verco (to have tea at his retirement home in Sussex in 1997), the Revd and Rt Hon. Dr Graham Leonard, KCVO (to have tea at his house in Oxfordshire in 1998), and Dr Michael Siddons (to stay at his house in Gwynedd in 1998).

I understand that honours are most commonly forfeited when the person upon whom the honour has been conferred has been convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to imprisonment for a period of not less than three months, but that other reasons for forfeiture can also be considered. If Mr Chesshyre had been found to be fit to plead and had been convicted of the offences in the normal way he certainly would have been sentenced to imprisonment for a period considerably longer than three months. Further, Mr Chesshyre suffered from no mental disorder during the period when the offences took place. During his trial Mr Chesshyre's counsel argued that his mental disorder began in the summer of 2002, when he suffered a stroke. I therefore think that it can reasonably be inferred that if Mr Chesshyre had been brought to justice at any time before the summer of 2002 he would have been sentenced to imprisonment for a period of not less than three months and any honours which he held at the time of sentencing would have been forfeited as a matter of course. Mr Chesshyre surely ought not to derive any benefit from the fact that the offences were committed in such a way that he was able to delay the course of justice for a period of more than fourteen years. Further, while Mr Chesshyre did not satisfy the very high threshold set for a defendant to be found to be fit to plead, he nonetheless attended, and clearly understood, his trial.

I believe that it would be wholly inappropriate for a person who has committed such serious offences to be allowed to retain any honours or other distinctions conferred upon him by The Queen. Since Mr Chesshyre's offences involved abuses of the important responsibilities entrusted, and the high privileges granted, to him by The Queen, I believe that it would be all the more inappropriate for him to be allowed to retain those honours and distinctions which reward the service which he gave to Her Majesty. Further, I do not believe that the mental disorder from which Mr Chesshyre now suffers ought to be allowed to afford him any protection against the consequences of acts which he did when he did not suffer from that mental disorder. I am therefore asking you to consider whether a recommendation ought humbly to be submitted to Her Majesty that Mr Chesshyre's appointment to be a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order be cancelled and annulled and that his name be erased from the Register of the Order and further that he forfeit the Queen Elizabeth II Silver and Golden Jubilee Medals.

With all good wishes.

Yours sincerely

WM-A120