

10 of 166 DOCUMENTS

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## Jailed: Sexual predator who stalked silent world of deaf children

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FOR 30 years, he was held up as the perfect role model, a talented sportsman who triumphed in the face of adversity and enriched the lives of thousands of people in the deaf community.

But yesterday, the life and career of Colin Macdonald, a mountaineer and skier who helped set up the Deaf Olympics, was left in tatters as the disgraced instructor was jailed for 12 years for sexually abusing vulnerable young boys.

Macdonald had betrayed the trust of his victims and ruined their childhood in a catalogue of abuse spanning almost a decade. Deaf and without speech like the children he preyed upon, he had been previously convicted of sexually abusing ten boys from 1973 to 1981 at the High Court in Kilmarnock. It is feared there may be up to 100 other victims who have not come forward.

Yesterday, at the High Court in Edinburgh, judge Lord Malcolm told him a lengthy prison term was the only sentence for his "disgraceful" offences against the young people in his care. George Drinnan, 45, Jim Colhoun, 48, and Joseph McIntyre, 46, had waived their right to anonymity to urge other victims to come forward.

Through a sign language interpreter, Mr Drinnan, 45, of London, said: "It's a huge relief. He deserved it. I hope he dies in prison."

Mr Colhoun, 48, of Glasgow, said:

"We have suffered and we are still suffering. It will be in our minds for ever."

As an outdoor activities instructor, Macdonald was in demand at youth camps across the country and he was regarded as a shining example of what could be achieved, in spite of his disability.

Macdonald, 61, who now lives in Wakefield but is from Glasgow, had denied the offences, but was found guilty by a jury of conduct ranging from sodomy to fondling a victim's private parts.

He targeted children at a youth camp he organised and plied them with drink before molesting them. The abuse took place during camping trips in Aviemore, Glencoe, Mallaig, Harris, Rhum and Sutherland, and at various addresses in Glasgow and Ayrshire. His oldest victim was 15 and the youngest ten.

Compounding his victims' distress, during his trial Macdonald denied the charges against him, forcing his accusers

to give evidence through sign language interpreters.

One victim told the court when Macdonald abused him he screamed out, but no-one could hear him because all his companions were deaf.

The pioneering sportsman had forged an international reputation in mountaineering and had taken part in the Deaf Olympics.

He made his name setting up the Deaf Olympics in the 1980s, and took teams to Italy, Norway, Canada and Finland.

Defence solicitor-advocate, Paul Burns, said: "The success of that resulted in a member of the deaf team skiing for the able-bodied team at the Olympics - truly ground-breaking stuff. And all that work was voluntary. As recently as 2005, he played a significant role in the Deaf Olympics in Melbourne.

"There are elements of tragedy here, in that somebody who contributed so much used his gifts, as it were, so badly."

Macdonald's crimes would have gone undetected but two years ago he was caught after two of his victims exchanged text messages and contacted the police.

Lord Malcolm told Macdonald: "You sexually abused and assaulted vulnerable deaf children who were entrusted to your care while on expeditions in isolated places far from their homes. You had no regard to the damage being done."

As well as jailing Macdonald, Lord Malcolm placed him on the sex offenders' register and said he would be referred to the relevant authorities as a person who was unsuitable to work with children.

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