

# EXCLUSIVE: THE EXPRESS PROBES THE CHURCH BRANDED BY A JUDGE

By MICHAEL O'FLAHERTY

AN ENGLISH country garden. Beautiful lush lawns, flower beds of startling colour. But a young, dark-haired girl presents a bizarre spectacle as she sits cross-legged on the lawn eating her lunch oblivious to the summer storm pouring down on her head.

Two other girls lovingly entwined in each other's arms march past in the shadow of the 18th century Manor House.

All wear a naval-type uniform, dark blue with lashings of gold braid. The whole scene is surreal, like something from the puzzling TV series *The Prisoner*.

The clone-like girls have a mission today—to prove to me that the Church of Scientology branded corrupt, sinister and dangerous by a High Court judge this week—lives in spiritual love, not hate.

## Influence

Slung by the judges' comments—Mr Justice Lacey also said Scientology is a slave cult—officials opened the door of their sanctuary in East Ormsland, to me.

Here, deep in the heart of rural Sussex, the church is well-established, powerful. And founder L. Ron Hubbard's influence is everywhere, although he is not.

Big, bluff, smiling Ron—his pictures are everywhere—has vanished. A court in America claims \$80 million of the church's funds have gone too.

So where is the man painted "A Hitler" in the High Court? My guide Robert Springall, 33, a bio-chemist, graduate, said: "He has disappeared to his can have some privacy."

## Improved

We go on with the tour. A huge banner floats across the driveway, dripping rain. The slogan reads: "JOIN THE I WANT TO GO OT CLUB."

OT? My guide explains: "That's an Operating Thetan. A new word for spirit. An Operating Thetan



Hubbard's pictures dominate: There are four in this classroom



Stately walls that hide the secrets of Scientology



A weird collection of models on a classroom table

is one whose abilities are improved as a spirit."

Confusing phrases and words seem to be a sort of "in" cook. *Dianetics*, a poster proclaims. Is it a word? Mr Springall says, it means "the modern science of mental health" from which Scientology sprang.

Founder Ron wrote a book about it apparently, in 1950.

Mr Springall spoke reverently of Ron Hubbard. Yet in the Family Division case, Mr Justice Lacey refused custody of two children because he is a Scientologist.

The Hubbard portrayed around Saint Hill Manor House, is mostly in his Commodore role, gold-braided cap, and smiling.

I am taken to the Pavilion, a domed building near the castellated edifice the Scientologists are building for classrooms.

## Legend

On the wall is a legend: "This was once a space used by L. Ron Hubbard to conduct some vital research on the growth of plant life under different conditions. It produced more tomatoes

per bunch than ever before and corn 11ft tall..."

Record tomato crops, corn 11ft tall! Is there nothing L. Ron Hubbard is capable of? Outside the troops are marching; strident drill calls echo. The Scientologists in their uniforms are on parade.

"The keynote of Scientology," Mr Springall explains, "is self-betterment, stemming from a philosophy and understanding of man as a spirit."

And wearing a uniform? I ask. He replies: "The Church Army and the Salvation Army wear a uniform. I've got one." He

paused: "But it's not suitable today."

They have lots of activities, competitions, and in one classroom they mould Plasticine figures.

## Theory

"The models," Mr Springall says battlingly, "illustrate a basic principle of theory".

Talking of theories, I said, what about L. Ron Hubbard? My guide said of the 73-year-old cult chief: "He's not wanted by the police and he's not dead he is working for us all."

# Inside the sanctuary of sinister slave cult



Smiling Ron: "vanished"