

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

IOH

1. My name is IOH although I am known as IOH. My date of birth is 1963. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I was born and brought up in Edinburgh. I had a brother called who was two and a half years older than me. He passed away ten years ago. He had poor mental health for a number of years before his passing.

Life before going to Edinburgh Academy, Edinburgh

3. I lived with my parents and brother in Edinburgh. I had a perfectly normal and happy childhood.
4. My brother and I were sent to Edinburgh Academy as day pupils. This was the only school I ever went to. I have no idea why my parents chose Edinburgh Academy. I think they thought they were buying us a good education and were doing the right thing. There was no history in the family of anyone previously going to the school.
5. I believe there was an application process for the school and perhaps some assessment but I cannot recall that.
6. I went to the school from either 196 or 196 to approximately 197. I was there until I was sixteen years old.

Edinburgh Academy, Edinburgh

7. The school had three schools. The first school you went to for two years, from age four or five, that was Denholm Green. The second school was the junior school at Arboretum Road. You went there until ten or eleven years. The final school was the senior school at Henderson Row where I remained until I was sixteen years old.
8. I have no real memory at all of Denholm Green school, it was so long ago. I have a little bit more memory of the junior and senior school.

Routine at Edinburgh Academy Junior school, Arboretum Road, Edinburgh

School day

9. I got a lift to school from my dad. I would be there for school starting at about 9 am. We had an assembly for the whole school. I seem to recall it may have been every morning or at least once a week. The teachers would take a roll call of the pupils. Assembly was taken by SNR [REDACTED] at that time I think it was Mr IGG [REDACTED].
10. We had a form class and teacher and that changed every year. I remember one in particular, Mr John Brownlee.
11. School finished about 3.15 pm unless we had sport and the day went on until 5pm.

Uniform

12. We wore a blue blazer, shorts, shirt and tie. The only difference with the senior school was we wore a blazer in the summer and a tweed jacket in the winter. One also stopped wearing shorts at senior school.

Food

13. We all ate in the school canteen. We would sit in our classes at a long table with our form teacher. The food was horrible but you ate it.

Abuse at Edinburgh Academy Junior school

Mr John Brownlee

14. I want to tell the Inquiry in particular about the last year at junior school and my form teacher, one John Brownlee. Brownlee was a brutal, vicious bastard. He taught most of my lessons in the last year. I was about nine or ten years old when I was in his class.
15. Brownlee had a reputation and it really was the short straw if you ended up in his class. I remember feeling sick when I heard he was going to be my teacher for that year. Of course, I never spoke to anyone about my concerns. You just didn't do that. The whole school was run incredibly authoritarian. There were the teachers and the kids and no one spoke to anyone about anything. Neither did I speak to my parents about it. You are drummed in at a very early age not to speak about anything. In addition, I never ever spoke to my brother about anything at all that went on at that school ever.
16. It was a year of complete terror for me that year with psychological and physical abuse on a daily basis. It was horrific. I came out of that year a very different person. Most certainly in terms of my grades. They ran a streamed system in terms of ability and I was always in the top stream until that year. I lost all interest in school and my education. All I wanted to do was leave school and I was only ten or eleven years old. The grades were very much noticed by my parents and they blamed me but I still did not say anything.
17. Every Monday morning, he would come into the class and point to say four or five children and he would put them on the 'slob list'. It appeared random but there were

definitely kids on it more than others. I was frequently on it. If say you had glasses, you were more likely to be on it rather than say someone who was sporty. The names would go on the wall and you knew if you were on that list you would most certainly get a beating that week. That put kids into a state of anxiety all week wondering when the beating was coming. The beatings took place in front of the class.

18. He would set work in the class and he walk up and down the rows of children working. He would wear brown brogues and he'd clip clop up the lines. There was a sense of relief if he passed you by. Otherwise, he would grab you by the hair, drag you from your seat, smash you onto the floor and kick the shit out of you and stamp on your head. He would then move onto someone else. This happened to me and I saw it happen to others.
19. One time he took me from my desk, for no reason, to the blackboard which had a door and hinge. He then slammed the door onto my head and I fell to the floor. It was a trick of his and he did it quite often to me and others. On this occasion though I was unconscious. I was left to come to and then ordered back to my desk.
20. He would beat kids with a cricket bat in front of the class. Or sometimes with a clachan which was a wooden spoon type thing. He would really use anything that came to hand. Sometimes the blackboard rubber would get thrown across the class at a child. But then he would also use his fists and feet.
21. Before a beating he would often get the kids to drop their shorts to make sure they didn't have any padding down there to protect themselves from any beating. I don't believe it was a sexual thing it was purely to check if there was padding.
22. He would also do this thing with his knuckle where he would ram his knuckle into your spine and grind it in. It was excruciatingly painful.
23. He would take great delight in sitting talking to the class telling us really extreme stories about sexual torture. One time he was telling us a story about witch trials and

he was going into detail about the sexual tortures that were carried out on the witches. One kid started crying and he was dragged out and got a beating for that.

24. I remember one day he walked into the classroom carrying a cricket bat and he absolutely smashed it on his desk. Everyone jumped. He laughed. That was the start to the lesson. He loved the fear and power. I believe he got off on it and I believe he got some form of sexual gratification by frightening young children .
25. I would say a lot of his behaviour was controlled to an extent but there would be times when say a child answered back and he would completely lose control. At those times he would throw you around the room and kick the hell out of you. That's when he got completely dangerous.
26. He would also call myself and other children derogatory names.
27. I believe other teachers knew about it. Other teachers would come in when he was doing it. It was the culture and an open secret. It seems appalling now and I don't know how it was allowed to go on.
28. It was an everyday occurrence in the classroom. The whole class was in a constant state of high anxiety and terror. You would be relieved if you got through his class without a beating but at the same time you were terrified for the next day. Because of the fear inside the classroom no one spoke about it outside.
29. I was beaten so often that the back of my legs were often black and blue. I wouldn't get changed in front of my parents at home because I didn't want them to know. I assumed it was my fault and my parents would side with the school.

Ian Wares

30. On the happy occasions when we could escape Brownlee's class we then went to Ian Wares for rugby.
31. He would get us all in the changing rooms to explain the rules of the game. What he would do was stand behind me or another child and press in close to one's body and at the same time put his hands down our shorts and have a feel. All the while talking about the game. It was a regular thing and a normal occurrence. While it was in front of other children I don't think it was a secret as it was done in plain sight and teachers must have known.
32. At the time it didn't seem so bad and it didn't really bother me because it wasn't Brownlee and I wasn't getting physically violently assaulted.
33. He would also get us all when we were naked in the showers and flick us with a towel. That was really painful.
34. To my mind the whole of the school and the authorities of the school were aware of the behaviours and enabled it. They colluded. This fellow Wares was moved from Edinburgh Academy to Fettes and I believe he was given a recommendation and reference by the academy. In the school magazine the headmaster at the time wrote about Wares move along the lines of wishing him well and hoping that he enjoyed the boys at Fettes as much as he enjoyed the boys at the Academy. Words to that effect. It wasn't hidden, definitely not.
35. I don't want it to sound like some big paedophile group but they were all a gang and they were all mates. Mr Brownlee, I believe, was the best man at Mr Wares wedding. They were the establishment in that school.
36. There were other teachers at the junior school who were violent. Corporal punishment was the norm but none of them behaved to the extent of Brownlee and Wares.

Routine at Edinburgh Academy senior school

37. I moved to the senior school when I was eleven years old. In general, senior school was horrible for me. I had given up with school during my year with Brownlee. I was just counting the days until I could leave. My grades continued to slide, they never picked up because I wasn't doing the work.
38. I started experiencing anxiety and panic attacks at the senior school. It was at the senior school that I was placed in the class of another abuser, Hamish Dawson. He perpetrated abuse on me and others. He probably wasn't as vicious as Brownlee but by that point I didn't care. I never had the shock and terror there as I did at the junior school.

Trips

39. The school had a house in the Highlands where I went to once. We did outward bound activities there.

Schooling

40. I don't have much opinion on the quality of the schooling in the school. That said you were very much educated to be a bigot. To think you were better than other people and better educated than others. That everyone else was scum and you were leaders. They certainly tried to teach us that.
41. I remember there was a fight outside of the school one time involving our pupils and pupils from another school. I remember the headmaster standing at the assembly saying something about the other kids being less than us. That we would always be better than them. It was indoctrinated into us we would be leaders.
42. I sat my O levels while I was at the school. I passed seven which was quite surprising because I didn't do any work.

Sport

43. I wasn't that good at sport at school and that definitely impacted on me. There was a lot of emphasis on sport. If you weren't good at sport then you did suffer. Those that were, got other privileges like say being a prefect.

Abuse at Edinburgh Academy senior school

Hamish Dawson

44. Dawson was a history teacher. He perpetrated a lot of physical abuse in his class. He had this big cupboard in his classroom that contained all sorts of homemade torture weapons which he had names for. I remember he had one weapon he called the idleness inhibitor. He would make you go and get whatever weapon he wanted out of the cupboard and then hit you with the item. After it he would give you a jellybean sweetie.
45. If your shirt was untucked he would put you over his knee and tuck you in and fondle your genitals at the same time. It was in the same vein as Brownlee but with far more groping and his had a sexual element to it as opposed to Brownlee. This would be in front of the whole class. It happened to me and I saw him do it to others.
46. There would be other occasions where he would hit someone with a cane as a beating, they would then be told to put the item back in the cupboard and told to go and sit on his knee and he would cuddle them. Really creepy, weird stuff.
47. It was the same enabling with him and the institution. I believe he was popular with other teachers and was friendly with the headteacher. They were aware of the homemade weapons and I think they found it quite humorous. When he left the school there was some form of eulogy to him where the headmaster who I believe was Mr Ellis, even mentioned his weapons.
48. It was a see saw with him, either getting beaten or being fondled and he would always give you a jellybean afterwards.

49. Dawson's behaviour was pretty much daily. I got beyond caring and I would switch off to it.
50. He was the only one in my experience that behaved like that. Again, there were other teachers who gave out corporal punishment but none as bad as him. They all knew what was going on. I got the impression that if you were a teacher there you just went along with it, it was the culture.

Prefects

51. The prefects at the school were entitled to dish out corporal punishment at the senior school. They would often give you a beating. They had a desk in their office and they would bend you over the desk and one would pull at your legs and another at your arms so you were in a v shape. They would then grab a bat and run the length of the room and whack the bat down on you. The other one would then take a shot. This would go on for as many times as they deemed necessary. That happened to me on several occasions.
52. They would walk around the playground like the police. They could basically do as they wanted. I just tried to stay out of their way.
53. In my last year I was pulled into their office and I told them to fuck off. They didn't do anything that day and it stopped after that.

Reporting of abuse whilst at Edinburgh Academy

54. I never reported any of the abuse at the time.

Leaving Edinburgh Academy

55. As soon as I turned sixteen years old I walked from there. My parents were not happy about it but I did it. They couldn't understand how I had lost all interest in school.
56. My brother stayed at the school and did his Highers there. He was always in a lower stream than me and I should have been the one to do better.

Life after leaving Edinburgh Academy

57. I had no plan after school, it was always to get away from the school and from Edinburgh. I went to Aberdeen initially and stayed with my brother who was studying there. I also started to drink quite heavily. I think that was because of the anxiety and panic attacks.
58. I didn't stay with him for long and realised I wanted to get away from Scotland in its entirety. I had a Scottish accent and I very quickly got rid of it because I wanted to cut all ties with Scotland.
59. I moved to England and ended up living in squats, drinking heavily, was unemployed, doing drugs and busking. I then moved to London and that cycle continued. Busking to get money for drink and that lasted for years.
60. The main reason I was drinking and taking drugs was to self-anaesthetise to combat the panic attacks which I was suffering from.
61. I completely cleaned up fifteen years ago but that brought its own issues as I no longer had that anaesthetic. I ended up going to accident and emergency and was referred for CBT. My treatment lasted about two years and I was prescribed anti-depressants which I didn't want to go on. Those worked well. I came off them for a

while but I realised I had to go back on them and have been ever since. I am certainly in a much better place.

62. I have been diagnosed with anxiety disorder. I never spoke about my time at the academy during my treatment. I never made the connection but now I have. It wouldn't be true to say I had buried my time at school, I always just put it away in my head. It was constantly there, it was history. I do, though, still have nightmares to this day about my time.
63. I have been married for thirty three years and have two children.
64. In terms of work, I am a self-employed delivery driver for Amazon and I also do live sound mixing for bands.

Reporting of abuse

65. I reported all of this to the Police in August 2022. The reason I did this is because I heard something on the radio by Nicky Campbell who was a pupil at my school in a couple of years above me. He was talking about the school and this fellow Edgar, who I know as Mr Wares. It stopped me in my tracks and I listened to it. Afterwards I tweeted him, we got talking and he explained to me the importance of going to the police. I didn't really want to, but I also felt I owed it to my nine year old self to contact Operation Treefrog which I did. I provided a full statement. It was really therapeutic for me as it was the first time in fifty years that someone had really listened to me and took it seriously.
66. The updates have been pretty good and I believe they now have about eighty statements about Brownlee. The prosecution has since been in touch and have advised that a court case may still go ahead without the individuals being present.

Impact

67. The school haunts my nightmares. It used to really affect my sleep but after I started taking the anti-depressants it really helped.
68. If I go up to Scotland and I cross the border I start to feel really uneasy. When I go to Edinburgh it gets worse. I can't go to the area in which the school was. I generally just feel really uncomfortable going to Scotland. Going to Edinburgh is most certainly a trigger, even after fifty years.
69. For a long time, I had trouble forming relationships. When I left the school I was a very selfish, self-centred person. I had no empathy for anyone else. I was only interested in myself. That made it difficult for me to form relationships and therefore I had only casual relationships for a long time.
70. My brother had bad mental health problems, he died about ten years ago. My father has also passed away. My mother is ninety now and she was absolutely shocked when these revelations came out last year. She asked me about it, something I was dreading. I told her it was true and I told her about my experiences. This was the first time I had spoken about it to her.
71. I have a terrible attitude to authority, I think that is as a result of being at the school. This attitude is why I do sound engineering and driving because I am self-employed and do not need to answer to anyone. Any position where I have been employed has never worked.

Records

72. I have lodged a civil action as I want the institution to be held responsible for what happened. This is currently ongoing. My lawyer obtained my records, there was only one page of scribbled notes with a list of my classes and my position in each class. There were also comments by the headmaster along the lines of I was wasting my opportunity at the school because I wasn't working hard.

Lessons to be learned

- 73. I think the whole idea of boarding school is weird, why would you send your children away? I certainly wouldn't. They should be nurtured at home.
- 74. I believe we need to address the culture in these establishments and to have a place where children can have a safe place to speak.

Hopes for the Inquiry

- 75. If my statement can be of any assistance then I am happy. I just really want the school to be held accountable for what went on and for the public to know what went on.

Further information

- 76. I was part of a survivor group for a very short time. I was advised by the police to leave it as they suggested that defence lawyers would jump on any suggestion of collusion between witnesses. This was the same advice I received from my own lawyer. I left the group immediately. I would have like to have been in it but I took the advice of the Police and my lawyer.
- 77. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed. IOH

Dated. 10 July 2023