

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

IBV

Support person present: No

Introduction

1. My name is IBV. I was born in . My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. I have been encouraged by the Inquiry team to provide background to the abuse that I encountered so that much of this statement describes life in general at the Edinburgh Academy.
3. In making this statement, I think it is relevant to bear in mind what was normal at the time. Homosexuality was illegal until 1967, the last hanging was in 1964, the Race Relations Act was enacted in 1965. The general care of people in society has moved on. Seventy-three people died building the Forth Rail Bridge in 1890, seven died building the Forth Road Bridge in 1964 and one died when building the new bridge in 2017. Some neighbours objected to us playing football on a Sunday because they felt it was inappropriate on the Sabbath.

Life before going to boarding school

4. I was born in the south of England. I had a very happy childhood, in a rural environment. A comfortable middle-class upbringing. I don't ever recall any physical punishment from my parents. I had siblings. There was some discussion as to whether I should go to boarding school at all. The background was that the state system in a rural community was pretty poor. I had experienced it for a year at the local primary

school in the village, I was mocked. Not just by fellow pupils, but also by a teacher for being reasonably bright, which is scandalous to look back on it. The local primary school had just two classes so there were three year groups in one class.

5. I then experienced a few years in a small private school, which was better, but still had an idiosyncratic form of education. At that stage I doubt there was much in the way of common standards so we learned some peculiar things.
6. For secondary schooling, the state choices were either to go some distance to a good grammar school, which would have been an hour each way every day and I wouldn't have had the opportunity to participate in many extra-curricular activities, or a poorer grammar school still 30 minutes away. There was no private secondary school within reach of any use, so that's why I went to boarding school. Apparently, although I don't remember this, I was desperate to go because my friends from the local private school were all going to boarding school.
7. Both my parents had been boarders because their parents had worked overseas at the time, so they knew what they were letting me in for. My father went to Edinburgh Academy. My mother went to an English boarding school, which she hated, and apparently she wasn't at all keen that I went away. I went to board at the Academy from the early sixties till the early seventies. I started when I was only eight years old and I left when I went to university.

Edinburgh Academy, Edinburgh

8. In the summer I sat an entrance exam and was shown around the boarding house. I then started in September.
9. By way of background on how the Academy was set up at that time; The early years – reception, years one and two were at a house in Inverleith called Denham Green. Years three, four, five and six were at Arboretum which was called the Junior School.

I think this had been built in the late fifties, possibly early sixties. The rest of the school, which was called the Senior or Upper School, was in Henderson Row.

The boarding houses were as follows: Mackenzie House, which was the junior house had about forty pupils. Dundas House had sixteen and then two senior houses, Jeffrey and Scott both with about forty pupils. The senior pupils were split between these two houses, not by age, but just splitting each age group in two. I was in Mackenzie House for years four, five, six, and then for one year at the upper school. I was then in Dundas for year two, then in Jeffrey House until I left school, so for years three, four, five and then, slightly confusingly for year seven. The Academy, at that time, split its sixth form into class six that did Scottish Highers and class seven that did English A' Levels. The year groups were about seventy in the junior school and ninety in the senior school. There seemed to be a fairly rigid maximum class size of twenty-four. For A' Levels, the set sizes were smaller, but I forget how many. The boarding houses were in Kinnear Road, close to the Junior School in Arboretum Road. The Senior School was in the original building in Henderson Row about a 20-minute walk away.

10. The boarders were about a quarter of the total pupils in the senior school. I have always thought that this combined with the location on the school in a major city meant that the Academy was rather more balanced in outlook than schools that were all boarding isolated in the countryside.
11. The bigger houses had a housemaster, a resident house tutor and a resident matron. The House Tutors tended to be young masters new to the school, often straight from university. They lived in the house and did one evening in the week and one day at weekend, I guess in exchange for free board and lodging. Dundas House being much smaller didn't have a matron - the housemaster's wife was expected to double up as matron. It didn't have a resident house tutor either. A master would come in for one evening a week and some time at weekends, but then go home to his own accommodation.
12. My first housemaster at Mackenzie House was Paddy McIlwaine. He was old school, fierce but fair. Then the housemaster was ICG [REDACTED]. The system was that they

would be housemasters for ten years, so there was some movement. I think Paddy McIlwaine moved onto Scott House for a bit, but I'm not absolutely sure. ICG had previously been housemaster in Dundas House, I think moving to Mackenzie House was regarded as a step up.

13. One of the characteristics that was unattractive in some masters, and I doubt things have changed since, is the ability for people to either be able to hold their temper or not. Paddy McIlwaine was strict but didn't lose his temper, whereas ICG could on occasion lose his temper, but he was still fairish, and I wouldn't say there were any complaints about him.
14. As far as I can see, a problem for the Academy was that the housemasters appear to have been chosen very strictly only by the length of time they'd been a master at the school, with no reference to ability. Thus a teacher who had any sort of ambition would never become a housemaster at the Academy. He would have moved to another school to become a housemaster at an earlier date as opposed to waiting I think around fifteen to twenty years to be a housemaster at the Academy.
15. My memories of the House Tutors in Mackenzie House; IDX firm but controlled boys without any trouble, I think he taught in the upper school, but he never taught me. David Stewart who was a music teacher similarly able to control boys. He married Paddy McIlwaine's daughter. Then another master who never taught me, I think he was a master in the junior school, but I'm not absolutely sure. There was another house tutor who came in occasionally, a guy called IBL who was a slightly odd character, but I think he had the children's interests at heart.
16. The housemaster in Dundas House was Hamish Dawson. The house tutor was Tiger Murray who taught Latin and was my form master in year one. He was fierce, that's why he was called Tiger, but a very good man and I benefitted a lot from what he did in an extracurricular way over the years. I was sorry to see he died shortly after retirement.

17. I was then in Jeffrey House for four years. In Jeffrey House, the housemaster was Jack Bevan for most of my time. Colin Evans was my housemaster at the very end. In Jeffrey House for most of the time the house tutor was Howard Haslett, who, as an experiment for the Academy, was employed mainly as the school cleric. Life wasn't religiously motivated with him as house tutor. Although he'd taken religious orders, he was a very rounded person. Jack Bevan was a disciplinarian but completely fair, I just railed a bit as a teenager at the discipline. Colin Evans was a very fair and fine man, in particular his wife made a real effort to be there for the boys, particularly the senior boys. I certainly think having the matrons there was a positive. They were quite fierce, but completely fair and generally a civilising influence.
18. When I started at the school there was no central heating of any sort in the boarding house, Mackenzie House. There was one coal fire in the common room downstairs and that was it. In the bedrooms at night in winter it was pretty cold. So cold that if you put athlete's foot ointment on the windowsill it would freeze overnight. We all wore shorts and we used to get terrible chaps on your legs just where the bottom of the shorts rubbed your legs. The treatment was to go to see the matron and she'd rub some Vaseline on it. You'd get chaps most winters.
19. The Academy was the school of choice for the professional establishment. There were a lot of doctor's and lawyer's sons there and a number of other successful middle-class people. There were children of vets and children of farmers who in those days would be reasonably affluent.
20. As another sign of the time, about once a term we used to have a 'rag' with the house tutor, the tutor I remember doing this with was David Stewart. This was when we were aged ten or eleven. He'd come into the dormitory and there'd be about eight of us and he'd take on all eight of us in a fight. I'm not quite sure what the point of the fight was. We'd be attacking him and hanging on to one leg and he'd be trying to stand up and we were trying to pull him down. That would go on for fifteen or twenty minutes until eventually he'd say he'd had enough.

21. We wanted to have a 'rag' with him and he wouldn't do it other than maybe once a term at the end of term. It was a playful thing. I'm pretty certain there was no ulterior motive with him and he was a nice guy and he wouldn't lose his temper, even when he had eight small boys hanging onto him. There was no compulsion to get involved in this and a boy would be involved only if he wanted to be.

22. I contrast the matrons with the female teachers who were mainly in the junior school. Some of the female teachers were really fierce and they wouldn't hesitate to give out a physical punishment but the matrons never did. They had a lot to deal with but they were generally kindly ladies. There was one who was part of the Free Church of Scotland, which we called the 'Wee Free'. She was engaged to be married and had been for two years., Her husband to-be was a minister. When they married they were going to go off to be missionaries in Africa.. She regarded it as part of her duties as a person to get us to see the faith, she didn't insist on it but if you were at all interested we'd get religious pamphlets to read at night. It was a strange thing, I wouldn't say I was harmed by it, but it taught me a lot about the mumbo jumbo of religion.

Routine at Edinburgh Academy

Mornings and bedtime

23. We slept in dormitories that varied in size. The smallest I was in was for three boys, which was when I first started. Generally, they housed six to eight boys.

24. The routine was rigid. We got up at when the bell went. I think it was 7 am, except on Sundays, when it was 8 am. We then got dressed, went across to the Junior School buildings to have breakfast, came back and then went to school. In the junior years, just walking back to Arboretum for lessons and in the senior years walking down to the senior school.. You could have bicycles in the senior school, so some people cycled to school.

Mealtimes / Food

25. Meals had previously been taken in the houses, breakfast and dinner, but when the new school started at Arboretum, which was a five-minute walk away, all the boarders had their breakfast and supper in the new school, as well as lunches at weekends. Supper was quite early. I can't remember exactly, but about half past five, quarter to six.

School

26. In the junior school you were generally taught everything by the class mistress. When you moved into the upper school you were taught by different people for specific subjects. For example, Tiger Murray was the class master in year 1 and he taught Latin, but history was taught by Dawson.
27. I think it's only fair to point out some of the positives about the Academy. It was a much better education than I'd had previously. The classes were setted so you were automatically with a group of peers that was challenging for you, but similar enough that you wouldn't feel inadequate. The teaching was generally good, although one master spent most of his energy on producing the school plays which were good rather than his teaching of geography which was poor.
28. The extracurricular activities were so much better than anything I could have experienced at state school. I'd been passionate about sailing from a young age and you could sail from age thirteen onwards. I had a lot of happy times sailing there.
29. If you liked doing things, especially sport, the Academy was a good place to be. I had a group of mates around me the whole time and you could do stuff with them, otherwise I would have been in rural area living at home just on my own and I wouldn't have had those opportunities.
30. If you were a good sportsman people looked up to you, but there was also a lot of emphasis on music as well and there were loads of opportunities for music, there was a school choir and all sorts of music things going on. That didn't particularly interest

me, and because I was never very good at music, I was probably forgotten about musically which would have happened in sport as well for those who weren't good at it.

31. One boy I knew was very cross that he was made to play rugby when he didn't want to and then he hurt his thumb, tore a ligament or something. He was also a very talented cello player. He was furious about his thumb being hurt because it might have permanently affected his prospects of playing the cello. It was compulsory to play rugby to start with, but by the time you were thirteen or fourteen, certainly in the upper school, there came a time when you could, instead of doing cricket or rugby, just do runs. I knew some people who took the running option and they'd just get sports over with by doing running and it was a lot quicker as well. I was into sailing, and played cricket, hockey, rugby, squash and fives. We also played football after prep in the summer evenings.
32. Most afternoons, after the school day finished, you had games. If you were in the senior school, you would come back up to what was called New Field that backed onto the boarding houses and the games fields were there.
33. After supper we had prep, which was pretty rigid, and I think about two hours a night. I think you were meant to have three bits of homework, for forty minutes each. This was firmly enforced in the boarding houses. There was a break at half-time. This evolved as it went through the school, so in the junior years you didn't do as much prep and in the senior school it was still pretty controlled. Then, eventually to bed. During the break, in the middle of prep, you would get a cup of cocoa and a bun or something like that.
34. Academically I did pretty well overall but might have done even better if someone had managed to interest me more in doing more work.

Religion

35. Religion was pretty lightweight. There was an opportunity, to be confirmed if you wanted. Some did and some didn't. I wasn't confirmed as I wasn't interested. There wasn't any pressure and there didn't seem to be any difference in treatment.
36. On Sunday, the routine was different because breakfast was a bit later, then I think we had to do letter writing for forty-five minutes and then we went off to church. Letter writing was monitored in that they checked you'd managed to write two sides. It felt like a real pain at the time thinking of what to say. Then after church you were free, which was only about an hour until lunch, and then in the afternoon you were really free.

Leisure time

37. There was a lot of opportunity to go hillwalking which I was introduced to, I wasn't particularly enthusiastic about at the start, but tried it and loved it. The school had compulsory CCF which was tedious although with hindsight it was good to learn basic navigation and seamanship. I went on a CCF Arduous Training course at Easter which involved walking mountains in the snow. It was a fantastic experience, although I learnt for the first time how quickly your body can start to slow through exposure; happily we were well looked after so there was no danger. There was a Duke of Edinburgh scheme running which gave us more hillwalking.
38. The masters gave up a lot of time - one of them organised a trip to walk the Pennine Way. Three of them spent three weeks doing this in the summer holidays walking with us. Again, as a sign of the times, nobody thought anything of it that as a sixteen-year-old I shared a tent with one of the masters. That was the way it was and nothing untoward happened.
39. The masters that led the hillwalking at the Academy, centred round the CCF and the DoE, were experienced and many had done mountain leadership type qualifications. None of these were on the Pennine Way trip - the three were I think much less experienced. The Pennine Way is mostly benign but there are some parts in the high exposed hills. One day we were walking such a stretch in poor conditions – mist and

rain. We paused for a break and discovered we were one short. We retraced our steps and fortunately after only about 10 or 15 minutes found the missing boy who was walking very slowly and had what I now know to be the first stages of exposure. He was given a hot sugary drink. He revived sufficiently to continue with his pack split between us.

40. This experience of exposure has been invaluable in later life, enabling me on two occasions to recognise the signs and head down to safety before disaster struck.
41. Things didn't always end so well. A classmate of mine, earlier on, in year five in the Junior School, went on a school trip hiking to the Grey Mare's Tail. I didn't go on it. They counted up the boys after the walk and were one boy short. My friend, who wasn't a boarder, called [REDACTED] had slipped off a cliff and died. It really was a different era.
42. There were a host of other things; I learned to do printing - how to set-type. Very early on, one of the masters organised for us to use a computer so we used to send punch cards off to Imperial once a week. I was taught to play bridge by Tiger Murray, the house tutor in Dundas House. He taught anyone who was interested to play and I still play now. I had a lot of time for Tiger Murray. He was one of the people who took us hillwalking. He got his nickname because he was fierce. If you behaved it was fine and if you didn't behave, he was cross, but not unfairly or abusively
43. On a Sunday night occasionally there would be a film shown. I got involved and used to help run the projector. One of the masters had an after-school club making radios, so we all made our own radios. There was an industrial society where we went round to look at the relics of the industrial past. I played Chess in competitive matches against other schools.
44. We put on plays and I was part of the electrician's team for the plays. The school hall had some lights right up in the roof that were called eyeballs, so you could alter the way they pointed. For the play we were up in the roof altering the eyeballs. I had my hands on the casing of the eyeball and then touched a bare live wire with my thumb

which had been left exposed. I was then electrocuted. The electric current passing through me meant I couldn't release my hands – the muscles had seized rigid.

45. I pushed hard with my feet which broke the grip of my hands but unfortunately, my feet went through the ceiling and I started dropping thirty feet to the floor below. I managed to catch myself by my elbows and hauled myself back. I explained what had happened to the master in charge who just said 'ok' and that was the end of the matter. I don't know if I should have had any medical attention, but it was never suggested. I don't think my parents were told. I would have been aged sixteen or seventeen at the time.
46. IBL was another house tutor, he came in one afternoon and asked if anyone fancied seeing the motor museum. Three or four of us got in his car and went off to look at the museum. He was a slightly odd character in his mannerisms, but not in an untoward way. Paddy McIlwaine came in one afternoon and asked if anyone wanted to see the Forth Road Bridge which had just opened the day before. We piled into his car and he drove over the bridge, turned round and came back again. So, there were positives at the school.

Visits / Inspections

47. Half term in those days was just one day, a Monday. That weekend you went home to your families. You left on Friday afternoon but had to be back on Monday evening.
48. On each half term you had one day out on a Sunday and I used to go and see my grandparents, who lived in Edinburgh. Very frustratingly, you weren't allowed until after church which was always seen as an unnecessary restriction. I would then go and see my grandparents and I'd be back again by 8:30 pm or 9:00 pm. Generally you were controlled by having to be present at meals. You got a little bit of freedom as you got older, but you still had to be there for meals.
49. The only time I saw any Teacher being monitored was when we had an Ofsted type inspection, very light touch in the Junior School. Someone came into a classroom for

a quarter of an hour. That was the only time I saw any kind of inspection. The Inspector didn't speak to any of the boys. There was no regular appraisal of teaching that I could see.

Food

50. This was adequate just about. As a teenager I never had quite enough. Institutional cooking with boring repetition and some dishes that were universally disliked – e.g. tapioca. We begged for extra chips from the catering staff. You could have as much untoasted plain white bread, margarine and sickly non-descript jam as you wanted so we weren't starving. But we would have loved more delicious home cooking. Nothing all that fancy, just more properly cooked nutritious food.

Healthcare

51. There was a doctor in Inverleith called Dr Huddleston. We'd attend his surgery if the matron thought that was required. After he retired the new GP used to come down to the boarding houses to do a surgery for any boys that needed to see him. There was a dentist in Goldenacre that we'd go to for fillings, these might be done under a general anaesthetic just by the dentist with no one else present. Apparently this is very unsafe. I can't recall any unusual medical treatment being required. There were the usual broken bones playing sport, mumps, measles outbreaks, dicky tummies etc
52. I cut my hand once quite badly one evening towards the end of my time at the school on a corned beef tin. The cut wouldn't stop bleeding so my housemaster took me to the nearby Western General for it to be stitched up. I don't know whether my parents were informed. I still have the scar.

Running away

53. I only ever remember being homesick once which was quite early on in Mackenzie House. I just felt very alone and wanted to be at home. I didn't do anything about it and the next day I was all right. One of my friends ran away. He got the bus back to where his parents lived in Peebles – thirty miles away. He was allowed to stay the night but was sent back again the next day. He would have been about eleven at the time.

Fagging

54. We had to do general chores such as putting out the bins, mopping up the bathrooms at night, clearing the tables after meals. There was a small amount of doing things for House Ephors in Jeffrey House. I remember having to wash rugby jerseys using hand soap. But this had stopped by the time I became a House Ephor. The junior boys also had to go to the local shop on a Sunday morning to buy newspapers, ice-cream and sweets for all the house. You took it in turns. I think the timing was that you had to go round at breakfast, collect the orders and the cash, then bring it all back after church. I didn't find it too difficult, you just had to be organised and some of the older boys would give you a small tip by letting you keep the change. But some boys struggled to get it right.

Bed Wetting

55. There was one occasion in my first year. I wet my bed and didn't know what to do in the morning, so I just made the bed and left it. When I came to go to bed that night it was all clean, the matron must have dealt with it and never mentioned anything about it to me.

Discipline

56. Some masters could control boys with no trouble at all, they didn't have to use any punishments they could just control them. Other masters, however much they used punishments, just couldn't. Some people had the knack and some hadn't. I doubt if that's changed now.

57. One instrument used for physical punishments was the clacken which was a piece of wood, spoon shaped about eighteen inches long. The handle was about an inch to an inch-and-a-half wide and the spoon bit at the end was about four inches wide, this was used for playing a game called hailes. This was a bit like shinty or hockey. Two teams whack a tennis ball around with the clackens trying to get it into the opposition goal. We played it in the junior school, I think it is unique to the Academy. Each year group would play during the breaks, just an informal game between those that wanted to play. The clacken was also used for beating boys.
58. There was also the tawse, which was a leather strap about eighteen inches long, an inch or an inch-and-a-half wide and the end that hit you was split into two fingers. Slippers and gym shoes were also used for punishment.
59. In my first year, the class mistress was Mrs Doyle. She used the slipper or gym shoe on your bottom. She didn't use it a lot, and not unreasonably. In my second year Miss ICP [REDACTED] was the [REDACTED] she was also the [REDACTED]. She was a fearsome character. She retired I think, the year after I was in her class. She'd been there long enough to remember my father. There was another boy in the class whose father had also been there and who she also remembered. She used the tawse on your hand, but it also hit the bottom of your forearm. That was pretty painful. I think I only got the tawse from her once. I have thought carefully about the precise place the tawse was used as I understand that there may be some significance as to whether it hit your forearm. As far as I can remember it did hit the bottom of my forearm, but I can't be completely sure.
60. I remember Jack Bevan, who was my housemaster later on, beating me for something or other. It was almost as if he found the whole thing distasteful. It was if someone was only tapping me on the bottom with the gym shoe, it seemed he didn't want to do it, but in terms of sanctions I deserved a beating. I remember coming out surprised and thinking that he didn't really want to do that.

61. I remember getting beaten by Paddy McIlwaine. When we were waiting to go into supper or lunch at the weekend. I'd changed some of the numbers of the hymns that were going to be sung in assembly on Monday morning. For a joke I'd changed some of the number ones into sevens. So, on Monday morning when they struck up the hymn, some people started singing hymn 73 rather than hymn 13 or whatever. There was some confusion.
62. It was always regarded as important to own up, but if you did that you then got beaten. Paddy McIlwaine worked out it must have been one of us because it happened during the weekend. I owned up and I got beaten. It was rough justice, but harsh. I knew when I did it that I shouldn't have done it. He beat me in his study after prep. I can't really remember what he used to beat me with. I don't really remember the pain, what I do remember was him saying I had to go and see Miss ^{ICP} [REDACTED] in the morning and tell her that I did it. I remember being so upset and petrified about that.
63. I went to see her in the morning and told her I'd altered the numbers and she asked what Mr McIlwaine had done so I told her he'd beaten me. She said 'Ok, that's it then' and that was the end of the matter. I was so relieved. She didn't often beat people with a tawse and when she did it hurt, but she was just such a fearsome character you didn't want to get on the wrong side of her..
64. Generally speaking, beating was preferable to some of the other punishments. You wouldn't want to do a load of lines and you wouldn't want to be in detention. One of the worst punishments that I remember was the matron's punishment which was sentencing you to silence. This meant that for the hour or so between going up to get ready for bed and lights out you had to not speak. This was done by a matron called Miss ^{IFO} [REDACTED] in Mackenzie House. One a Sunday morning when we were all awake and a slipper fight started. We were all in bed and throwing slippers at one another.
65. As it was a Sunday, we'd be getting up at eight and not seven. Miss ^{IFO} [REDACTED] was pretty cross. She came in the room and wanted to know who had been throwing slippers and I said I was. She then told me I had to be silent for a week. That would be monitored whenever she was there. I got two extra days because she caught me speaking. It

was amazingly affective.as a punishment. The matrons kept really good discipline and they never used any sort of physical punishment. I don't remember much in the way of lines from them. They seemed to keep order through force of personality.

66. Most of the classroom beating was in the Junior School and perhaps year one of the senior school. Some masters never beat anybody, but they just seemed to keep order. I don't even remember much in the way of lines from some of them. We just respected their authority. Some of them couldn't help but beat boys.
67. Beatings were pretty ineffective. We were young boys who were always bashing into things and playing rugby a lot. We were doing painful things all the time. What was a beating supposed to achieve?
68. Prefects at the Academy were called Ephors. There were class Ephors, House Ephors and School Ephors. The system meant that from an early age you might get some sort of responsibility for doing things and trying to organise your fellows. I think for those that were Ephors that was pretty useful experience in managing people. Not so good if you were never an Ephor because all you ever got was being managed. When I was twelve I was in Mackenzie House and a House Ephor. On bonfire night I was given the responsibility of placing and lighting the fireworks and setting them off. In today's environment I guess this wouldn't be done, but at the time I was sensible enough to not risk injuring myself.
69. The Rector of the school, ICH [REDACTED] was seen from a distance - every day at assembly. He taught [REDACTED] but only part-time because he was busy running the school. He never taught me. I got to know him a bit when I was older as he was involved in the hill walking activities and he'd sometimes drive us. I remember him lighting his pipe in the car using both hands. The master in the front seat was sufficiently concerned that he steadied the steering wheel.
70. ICH [REDACTED] was a genuine sort of guy and I think he had the boys' interests at heart. I think he was out of touch with what was really going on and in the last week before I left, I happened to go to see him about something. As I was leaving he asked me if

there was anything about the school that should be changed? I was rather taken aback and didn't know what to say and just feebly responded with 'I don't think so'. That was the total extent of my feedback as to 9 years of education. A proper feedback system was missing and I'm not convinced that it is still not missing.

71. In my last term at the school, he held a dinner for the Senior Ephors, about eight of whom I was one. Before that I had been a Junior Ephor, one of about twenty. I remember aged about twelve watching as a sixth former came out of the Ephors room having been beaten for underage drinking, he was laughing to his mates about it. But by the time I became a Senior Ephor there was no suggestion that we had the power to beat anyone.

Abuse at Edinburgh Academy

Mr Dawson

72. Mr Dawson was the Housemaster of Dundas House when I was there for a year during which I turned thirteen. Prior to this he had taught me history in Year 1. I guess Dawson was in his late forties to early fifties. He did a lot of beating and I didn't feel his punishments were reasonable. At the time I just thought he was a sadist.
73. Dawson used to beat you in the classroom in an ostensibly jovial way. One incident I remember, was when he posed a question for us. The question was 'who was chiefly responsible for the production of wool in the Middle Ages?' You didn't have to have a go at answering this, but if you did and you got it right you got a jellybean and if you got it wrong you got beaten. We were all pretty convinced that it was the monks as that was what we had learnt the previous week. So we all wrote down monks. He triumphantly said 'no, it was the sheep'. So, we all got beaten, that is all the ones who took part in the competition. There were twenty-four in the class and about twenty in the competition. Dawson beat everyone, one by one, who had responded to the question. I can't remember now what he beat us with. Why the hell was he doing that, I think back in retrospect.

74. The year after that I went into his boarding house. That would have been 1967. There was something odd about that year. At half-term I went home and I didn't feel very well. My mother refused to let me go back. In the end I stayed off school for two weeks and then went back. I wonder whether that was all tied in with Dundas House not being a pleasant place to be.
75. There was a period of, I think, fourteen days and I think I got beaten by Dawson around ten times. For many years I remembered the offences precisely, but my memory has faded somewhat. I think it was 10 in 14 days, but it might have only been 8 in 10 days or something similar – it was almost once a day but not quite. I can't now remember all the offences, but I do remember one was for having dirty hands when eating. I'm not sure if it was at supper, it might have been at the cocoa and bun event we had before bedtime. Another was making too much noise on the stairs going to bed after I'd been told not to by one of the House Ephors. This was in conjunction with another boy called [REDACTED]. I think [REDACTED] made it worse by insisting it was not a time when we weren't allowed to make a noise. This wound Dawson up. I think [REDACTED] and I were beaten together, but I'm not sure. I can't remember what the other misdemeanours were, but they were inconsequential. Just a high-spirited youngster being boisterous. [REDACTED] committed suicide aged about forty and I have wondered why.
76. You tended to get beaten after you had changed ready for bed. The rest of boys knew you were going downstairs to get beaten and you'd come back having been beaten. It wasn't a secret you were being beaten. I didn't speak to any adult about it. All your cohort would have known about it, but nobody else would.
77. I do remember on at least one occasion Dawson offered a choice. I can't quite remember it precisely, but it was something like: If you got beaten in your pyjama trousers you could get beaten with a slipper or you could be beaten on your bare bottom with a clacken. It could have been the other way round. I think if you got beaten with the clacken on your pyjamas it would have to go in the 'beat book'. I don't know, but the implication was that there was some kind of beat book kept at the school of

the beatings. If you agreed to the gym shoe on your bare bottom that wasn't a proper beating so it didn't have to go in the beat book.

78. When he gave the option of how you wanted to be beaten, I think it was something he made up himself and it wasn't a school rule. He was implying that you didn't want your name in the beat book, but it left me thinking that rather he didn't want these beatings to go in the beat book as this would show how much beating he did. I resolved that from then on if I got beaten, I was going to insist it went into the beat book. In this little way I'd be standing up for myself. Soon after this I didn't seem to get beaten so much.
79. The way the choice was presented, I think it was more attractive in terms of the beat book etc that you got beaten on your bare bottom. The thing that I don't like in hindsight, was that he was just trying to get you to take your trousers down in front of him. I still feel uncomfortable talking about it now. I haven't really talked to anyone about this over the years. I only started to think through it properly after a school reunion when a boy, who'd been at the Academy with me, described Dawson as a paedophile. I feel worse about it after some of the material I've read since about what Dawson did to other boys.
80. Looking back at it now, I think it was dreadful that a small thirteen-year-old should be humiliated into taking down his pyjamas late at night with no one to turn to. I feel ashamed which is all wrong. The Academy should be ashamed.
81. There was another incident. It was a Sunday and we were in the boarding house making a rumpus. He came in fed up with the noise. He told us we had to run round the block, round the boarding houses and the fields. We did this. I guess it was about a mile and a half. There was a corner you could cut off by squeezing through the railings and across our playing fields. That's what most of us did. A couple of the boys didn't go round the block at all, just walked round the corner out of sight then back again. Dawson saw them and was furious. He asked if we'd run round all of the block. We owned up - he thought we'd all run a very short way and run back again, but most of us had done 90% of it. Because of this he decided that the following week we all had to run round three times.

82. In the middle of these events there was a 'day out' and I went to see my grandparents. As this punishment seemed really unfair, I told my grandmother about it. I had a cold at the time and she thought it was unfair and I wasn't well and it was just wrong. She rang up Dawson and said I wasn't well enough to run. Dawson then spoke to me when I returned from the day out and I remember the look on his face. He told me 'Your grandmother's rung up' and in some way implying that he was disappointed I had told her about things. He still made me walk round once even though I had a cold.
83. With hindsight I just wonder if I had laid down a marker and he couldn't rely on me not telling anybody. Was it coincidence that I didn't seem to get beaten anymore.? I wonder if that was enough to stop him in his tracks.. I know if I'd told my mother about the beatings, she would have pulled me out of the school. She wouldn't have listened to any assurances that it would stop. That was maybe why I didn't tell my mother because I liked being at the school. All this has given me a bit of insight to other things going on in society now and how difficult it is for people to speak out about them.
84. It leads me to wonder, what did the Academy know? In the Academy Chronicle, there's a piece about Dawson when he left. It reads '*As a housemaster he made the care of boys far from home a tireless vocation. Inmates of Dundas and Mackenzie Houses during the Dawson years will remember laughter and comfort, energy and invention. The unpredictable and the re-assuring and always the highest standards of behaviour expected and rewarded. They will remember too Sheena Dawson paying her part in making a junior boarding house as near as possible home.*' That's just waffle. It just does not reflect our experiences of him.
85. You can maybe glean more from what the Rector, Ellis (ICH had retired), said in his Commemoration Day speech when Dawson left. He said, '*I shall remember with pure pleasure the schoolboy smile and his menagerie of curious instruments of correction such as the idleness inhibitor*'. So the Rector knew that Dawson used to beat boys regularly.. The Rector also says of Dawson '*the passionate loyalty to an Academy where life was not always easy for him*' that was a very odd thing to say and I wonder what it meant.

86. Going back to Sheena Dawson, his wife, we never saw her in the house at all. There was some sort of interaction with the other housemasters' wives and some of them made a bit of an effort. You could certainly talk to them a bit, but I don't remember ever speaking to Mrs Dawson. She was always this slightly doll-like figure, impeccably dressed and almost like a statuette. I wonder if she had some problems and was Dawson abusing her? He had absolute control of the house, so I wonder was going on with his family. Reading that sentence from the Rector, he knew of something, what it was I just do not know. The Dawsons had two children, both girls. They were a little bit younger than us, but not by much. They lived in the boarding house too. We hardly ever saw them, the family lived in a separate part of the house. I couldn't be certain if Dawson ever administered a beating in front of his wife, but I never saw or heard of him doing so.

House tutor

87. One of the house tutors would lose his temper and 'flip'. Once we knew this, we would try to make him do so. Once we made a concerted effort over a few days to try to make him lose his temper by talking about plugs, so every time he came in the room, we'd tell him there was a problem with the plug in the basement or ask him if he'd noticed the plug for the television had come out of the wall. Eventually he erupted and blew a fuse. Not very nice of us.
88. I don't think he was ever given any training and coping strategies to deal with that sort of thing. Once he got very cross with one of my friends and beat him and made the boy's bottom go absolutely black and blue. I didn't see the incident, just the aftermath. I prefer not to name the teacher as I think he was let down by the Academy in not being properly supported, trained, monitored. He was a young teacher I think of twenty-two or twenty-three.
89. I can't remember why, but shortly after my father was gently trying to find out from me if everything was all right at school. I described this incident. My father insisted on writing to the Rector to complain although I didn't want him to. I asked him later what

had happened and he said the Rector had written back to him and said the incident had been dealt with, but he did not explain how.

Other boys

90. There was a bit of bullying going on. It was a bit Lord of the Flies and you didn't want to be the weakest. You'd gang up on the weakest a bit. I don't think anything was too terrible though with hindsight I'm ashamed of some of the group bullying that went on that I'd be part of it. There was also fighting which was wrestling rather than punching within your own year group I remember a couple of one-to-one wrestling fights where at the end of it, I was left a bit bruised..
91. I still haven't quite forgiven my opponent in one of them. After being evenly matched for maybe fifteen minutes, we agreed it was a draw and as we withdrew and shook hands, he grabbed me by the hand swung his arm round my neck and started to strangle me. He got me pretty badly and I could barely breathe. I lay on the floor for a bit and then crawled into bed. The next morning I was ok. This took place in the dormitory - he was the same age as me. It would be very difficult to blame the school for that, it could have happened in any environment, it was two young bulls having a go at each other.
92. One incident that I remember involved a friend of mine from the year above. He'd been bullied. He was ten or eleven. I didn't witness it, but he was set on by some of the older boys who put boot polish on his testicles. I think he was cornered in the changing rooms. I can't remember the details of it, but I do remember seeing the aftermath of it. I don't know what impact it had on him and I don't want to give his name.

Life after being in Boarding School.

93. After leaving the Academy I went on to university and then had a successful career. I am happily married with children.

Impact

94. I think it's important to make an initial point; that my abuse is far less to that which some other victims have suffered. Also, the main perpetrator is dead and the Academy no longer does boarding, so to some extent it is all history. But, I am disappointed that I didn't say anything at the time and thus might have, in some small way helped, or prevented other victims from being abused. I think it's also important to be open to encourage other victims to know they are not alone and that it is ok to speak out. This is why I am saying something now.
95. I feel I got off lightly in that I was never sexually assaulted by Dawson apart from being beaten on my bare bottom. Maybe the combination of my grandmother's intervention and my insistence of having my beatings recorded stopped the progression. My feelings are still evolving. Until ten years or so ago I never thought about it, but then I started to realise Dawson was maybe a paedophile not just a sadist. It wouldn't be right to say I'd been badly affected by it, but it's possible that it affected me in some way. I still feel ashamed of the whole thing.
96. Part of me being ashamed is that I didn't speak out, it might have done something. I also feel really sorry for my parents who spent a load of money sending me to school and if they'd known I would have been taken away. They wouldn't have wanted that to happen. My mother didn't want me to go away to school, but she reluctantly agreed. I don't think I could have sent my children to boarding school, but it is difficult to say I 'never would'. I used to be proud to be an 'Accie'. Now, I'm not so sure.
97. I have been more affected recently by the revelations about Dawson and the revisiting of the past. It has been helpful to confront the issues and be able to feel that I have now done all I can. But it has been unhelpful that the process has been so slow. It is nearly four months from my approaching the Inquiry to signing this statement. I keep worrying about what I am saying and trying to recall details. Once this statement is signed, I hope I can put the whole matter behind me again.

98. It is disappointing that the Academy's written submission has not been made public, so I can only therefore comment on the abridged version presented by their Counsel.
99. I feel the Academy's responses have been hollow. Their Counsel says that the Academy is '*has done its best to support all aspects of the Inquiry*' (line 5/6 page 30 of the transcript). They also state on their website that '*The Edinburgh Academy is fully committed to supporting our former pupils and helping in any investigations into accusations of historical abuse*'. The Academy knows who was in Dawson's house, and they will have many of the contact details through their Alumni records. They could write to those that they can and say if they suffered abuse to contact the Inquiry. They could offer to pay for counselling for those affected.
100. Have the Academy provided details to the Inquiry of any punishment guidance that was in place? Have they produced the Beat Books? I think they have a way to go before they can say that they are fully supporting the Inquiry.

Reporting of Abuse

101. I happened to hear Nicky Campbell on the radio one day and he talked about Dawson. I contacted Nicky afterwards and he was very helpful - he just let me talk with him and it felt like he understood because he had also suffered. I had been thinking about approaching the Inquiry, but thought the evidence phase was over. He told me the Inquiry was still going and the conversation encouraged me to come forward. Nicky was clear that I should only do so if I felt comfortable and it was what I wanted.
102. The Inquiry team that I have dealt with have all been very helpful, professional and considerate. It is just a pity that the process is so slow.

Lessons to be Learned

103. It's a package of reforms: teachers should know what's reasonable and what's not. I assume corporal punishment has disappeared now, but it needs to be clear what's expected of staff and what's not expected. Things like the punishment books ought to be enforced rigidly, it doesn't matter how you discipline people, it's got to be recorded.
104. At the stage I was at the school I don't think the teachers had to do any sort of training course because it was a private school and not a state school. Teachers would arrive aged twenty-two straight from university and become a house tutor and expected to deal with forty boys and without any training, as far as I could see, and with minimal supervision.
105. Teachers' ought to be regularly monitored in the classroom, there should be lesson observations and parents should be sent questionnaires and surveys on how the school is doing. The results obviously need to be handled carefully and sensitively. Then the results followed up if common patterns emerge.
106. Just relying on whistleblowing is insufficient. It is a big step in many instances to blow the whistle, but regular feedback makes it much easier to raise issues. Why is it that parents and children are not asked for feedback, whereas if you buy any consumer good, visit a restaurant or hotel, you are encouraged to report back?
107. Looking back, some boys weren't suited to being in a boarding school. Group living is just not for all.

Other information

108. 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.

IBV


Signed.....

21 December 2022

Dated.....