

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HRJ

Support person present: No.

1. My name is HRJ My date of birth is 1972. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going to boarding school

2. I had a bit of a nomadic childhood as my father worked for an international organisation so we lived in different countries before living in Scotland. I went to various schools before Gordonstoun due to my father's work moving us around.
3. I was thirteen when I went to boarding school. At that time, the family home was in Scotland. My brothers and I were sent to Gordonstoun so we could have a stable, settled education.
4. I think I was excited about going to boarding school. I'm very close to my elder brother and he was already at Gordonstoun. I was keen to go to boarding school and I had a sense of adventure about it all. I'd hit the teenage years and wanted independence from my parents.

Gordonstoun, Elgin

5. I attended an interview with the headmaster of Gordonstoun, Michael Mavor. I remember being a bit anxious about it, but there was no written exam. He just asked

me some questions. I think I might have had to read something, but I can't really remember now. It wasn't very formal. They then had a final year student show me round the grounds. Because my brother was already at Gordonstoun, I think it was a foregone conclusion that I would go there as well. I can't really remember my brother telling me much about the school before I went there, but I'm sure he probably did.

6. I was thirteen when I started at Gordonstoun and I went into what was called year 3. We had years 3, 4, 5, 6A and 6B. The philosophy of Kurt Hahn was somehow engrained in us quite early on. They spoke very much about the ethos of the school and the motto, "Plus est en vous," and the sense of there being more in you than you think. They would instil that into you. It was spoken about when we attended chapel.
7. There was a hierarchy of staff. Every pupil had a tutor, who I think was meant to look at your academic work. They would check in on you during prep time (homework time) to see if you were keeping up with your work, look at your grades and assignments. The tutor might have oversight of about ten pupils. There was a head of each boarding house, responsible for everyone in the house. Some heads of house seemed more involved and engaged with the kids in their houses and others less so and more authoritarian. I had one head of house who was unapproachable and lacking empathy and then later a different one who made an effort to try to get to know us and seemed caring, though talking about personal issues was difficult. There were also subject teachers. I don't know who was responsible for pastoral care as there didn't seem to be any talk of that then.

Routine at Gordonstoun

First day

8. I remember my first day clearly. My parents brought me up to the school. I think there was a bit of nervous excitement when I was left there. I was unpacked and in my dorm, trying to sleep, when the London train arrived. The London train was a bit of a thing at school. Many of the kids came from London and south east England and would take

this train to and from school each term. The train was essentially only for the school kids. All the kids from the London train would arrive quite late. There was racket in the corridor. I heard people asking where I was. They knew from my brother that I was starting school and wanted to meet me but I wasn't ready. I just sort of hid under the duvet pretending to sleep. The next morning, we went straight into the normal routine of the school.

9. There was a welcome service for the juniors in the chapel. There was a tradition where you walked up the 'silent walk'. It was a walk at the school where you walked from the gates that are beside the school lake up the 'Silent Walk' to an old chapel, the Michael Kirk. You weren't meant to talk as you walked up to it. You were supposed to contemplate. They probably still do that at the school because it was a big tradition for all new students. From that first walk up there, the Silent Walk and Michael Kirk were special places for me at school, somewhere I could retreat to surrounded by nature. There was a spirituality to the area that provided a place of solace when things were difficult.

Mornings/bedtime

10. There were six girls in the first dorm that I was in. There were always one or two from different year groups. There would be a senior in the dorm, in her final or second-final year at the school, and a couple of juniors as well. As well as me, there was another girl from year 3, one or two girls from year 4, a girl from year 6 and I can't remember the other person.
11. The dorm was in an old Nissen hut. It was a wooden building with wooden floors in the dorms. The dorms were poorly heated and I remember one year it was so cold, there was thick ice on the inside of the window by my bed. The dorms were open plan. When you walked in, there were three beds in a row, sticking out from the wall. There were three beds on the other side. Two of the beds had a divider between them. All of the dorms had one or two dividing walls half way up for a couple of the beds. You would always try and get one of the beds that was in a little nook like that, or against a wall, but there was an unwritten rule that the best beds were for the most senior girls

in the dorm. If you had a bed at the dividing wall, it had a little shelf at the top. The other beds didn't have anything, but they had drawers underneath them. We didn't have many things of our own. We just went to school with our trunks, which had all of our school clothes and one or two outfits for social occasions.

12. The bell would go in the morning and we went for our morning run. We had to do a short run down the hill and back up. We then had house duties that had to be done before we went down for breakfast in the cafeteria. We went on from breakfast to the chapel for assembly before starting morning classes.

Mealtimes/food

13. I can remember staff being present at lunchtime, but I can't really remember them being there at breakfast and dinner. There must have been someone there, but not that I registered. There were some tables reserved for seniors in the dining room, they weren't marked as reserved – it was an unwritten, unspoken rule that these tables were the top tables for the seniors. Other than that we could sit where we wanted. I could sit with my friends at mealtimes. We would queue up in the canteen to get our food. I can't remember there being a choice of food. I was pretty hungry so I think I used to eat it. I can't remember whether there were any consequences if you didn't eat your food as there were bins by the servery for putting food scraps in when you put your tray and dishes away. I just remember that every now and again a food fight would break out and we'd hide underneath the tables. One of the senior staff would come in and put an end to it.

Washing and bathing

14. We had a shower in the morning. We could have one after sport as well. The shower facilities were in the boarding house. We would go into a large bathroom and there were four or five showers in a row. There were no cubicles so it was all communal. There were shower curtains but they had been wound up over the showers rails and no-one ever put them down for showering. There was a bit of stigma or sense of shame if you wanted to use the shower curtains and have some privacy. The lack of privacy

and communal showers took a bit of getting used to when you first arrived. I don't think shower time was allocated. Seniors had different times for sports so they would have their showers later. The showers weren't supervised.

Schooling

15. We went to classes in the morning. We went back to our houses after lunch to get changed for sports. We always did sports in the afternoon, although in the senior years we had community service on Wednesday afternoons. There are many services at Gordonstoun including Fire, Coastguard, and Lifesaving. You had to choose one of them to join. The service learning is a key feature of the Gordonstoun education and I recall being in class when students in the fire brigade would have their beepers go off and they had to rush off to a fire call-out. After sports, we went back to the house to get changed. We got afternoon tea, toast and jam. We then went to study for an hour and a half or so before dinner and we did more schoolwork for an hour or so after dinner. We had classes on Saturday mornings as well until lunch time.
16. I think the teaching at Gordonstoun was good. Like other schools there were stand-out, dedicated teachers who inspired you, such as my English teacher, and others who didn't seem suited to teaching, lacking patience and shouting at the students. For me, it was the outward-bound stuff that I really enjoyed. When I think back to school, I think of the open space, the school grounds, the silent walk and being at one with nature on the expeditions. I'm not so sure about the academic side of things. I didn't do well in my A-levels and had to resit them in a secondary college. However, I don't think this was a reflection on the teaching at school but more to do with the fact that I had lost a family member in the weeks before my exams and was upset.

Sport

17. Sport was compulsory at Gordonstoun, but you could choose what you did and there was a variety of sports to choose from, both team and individual sports. I did a lot of swimming and we used to compete against some of the other boarding schools at swimming and other sports.

Work/chores

18. We would collect the post, empty the bins, collect the bread and take it out for afternoon tea, run the tuck shop and do the laundry. There would be people in charge of stripping the beds and collecting the sheets. Everyone in the junior years had a task to do, sometimes with others or on their own. The seniors would monitor whether we did these tasks.

Leisure time

19. There must have been some free time in the school day because I watched a lot of Australian soaps. I think we had a little free time in the evening, but not a huge amount but sometimes we could go to the sports centre after prep time. At the weekends there was very little to do unless you were away on a school camping expedition. You could go into Elgin on Saturday afternoon for a couple of hours, go for walks around the grounds or beyond, like up to the cliffs and beaches if you were older and had permission. Otherwise you would just stay in your house watching TV or hanging out in your study or visiting friends in their houses. We sometimes had a school or year dance and each house had a dance once or maybe twice a year. Some of us did photography and spent time at the weekends in the darkroom developing film.

Trips and holidays

20. I went on a trip to the art gallery in Aberdeen when I was doing my A-levels. We had camping expeditions in the Highlands. We had to do those about twice a year with our Houses and I think we did expeditions with our year groups as well. I liked the expeditions, and went on to do my Gold Duke of Ed, but I don't think everybody did. Most of the time the expeds were fun but also challenging. I recall one occasion where we were up a mountain traversing, what seemed a very narrow, ridge line and it was howling a gale. I remember being quite scared about being blown off the mountain or slipping and falling down it. But we managed to traverse and get safely off the mountain – and the next time I went on an expedition I was that little bit less afraid. We also learnt to sail and went on a sailing cruise around the West Coast and did a

night sail to Ireland. I really enjoyed that, but we had to do morning swims every day of the cruise. Throwing yourself into the sea off the West Coast of Scotland was not fun, I'd feel like I was about to hyperventilate. There was no talk of getting cold shock at that point. During these outdoor expeditions and sailing trips, there were times when you felt scared being exposed to the elements. But I guess on reflection this was all part of the school motto of there's more in you than you think. You could be terrified about falling overboard in rough seas but you survived. Faced with adversity you just had to get on with things and afterwards you could look back and feel a sense of achievement. I drew a lot of strength from these experiences. I did a trip to Thailand as part of a learning service. I had to fundraise for it. We went there for a month and put in water supplies for hill tribe villages. It was a great experience and made a huge impact on me, with me changing university degree choices. These overseas trips were organised regularly but they were only open to a few people who wanted to go rather than part of the regular school excursions. I think there were 10 of us plus a teacher who went to Thailand.

Pastoral care/peers

21. There was nobody in the staff you could go to if something was wrong. You had a tutor who checked in on you, I think on a daily basis during prep / homework time. But my first tutor was a male and I didn't feel comfortable talking to him. There were not many staff that were approachable, that you felt you could turn to for support. I suppose in some ways, reaching out for support felt like a failing – we were just meant to get on and deal with things in accordance with the school motto. If anything, you'd go to your peers but I don't recall my peers really talking about things either, not anything serious or emotional. It was only later that I realised how mucked up it was to have such a lack of support.
22. About five years ago I was talking to a friend who I had gone to school with. We spoke about what a warped system it was. We were dealing with teenage stuff, all of that, in addition to navigating a hierarchical system amongst peers with unwritten and unspoken rules and traditions, where Senior students meted out punishment to the Juniors. There were all these difficult aspects of life at a boarding school coupled with

being away from home and the issues teenagers face and yet we had nobody to talk to about it all, about how we were feeling, moods. We didn't even talk to each other about it. We were all living together, 24/7 and all dealing with our own stuff. We had great friendships but we didn't actually talk about things. Looking back, I feel like we were all just keeping our heads above water.

23. I remember one girl in our house had anorexia and she got progressively worse, with her hair falling out and becoming so thin. We were all really worried for her but weren't sure what to do or what to say. She seemed very unhappy and we'd try to include her in our activities and chats in the house. One day she simply left school – there was no discussion afterwards from the head of house or anyone about what had happened or checking in with us to see if we had any concerns. I know this situation impacted some of us as we felt helpless and sad that it had got so bad for her. The episode was just swept under the carpet. That was how it seemed to be back then.
24. The school provided an education, with unique outdoor learning experiences, but it did not play a parental role at all and there was no sense of pastoral support. I think the pastoral support was meant to come from your tutor or Head of House. However, we had a particularly dreadful housemistress. She had a scary dog called Mia, I think it was a Doberman. I had a real fear of dogs but this dog would just roam around the place. The housemistress would screech out at it. She'd summon you into her kitchen for a talking to and I'd be really anxious to see her as the dog would be there and also because she herself, the housemistress, was unnerving. She lacked warmth and empathy and was not the least bit approachable. It is hard to imagine today such a person being Head of the House, with oversight of our well-being and lives. My whole sense looking back then is that we had nobody to talk to. Later in my final years I had a very good tutor, who I felt I could open up to a bit. Not about specific incidents that happened to me but to say I was low and upset. She was more approachable and seemed to genuinely care about the students. She kept in touch after I left school for a few years but we're no longer in touch.
25. There was no counselling or the well-being / student welfare support that you might have in schools today. In my last or second last year there was an Irish priest visiting

the school. I don't know why he was there and I don't know how I ended up talking to him. I felt that I could perhaps have talked to him. I went down the route to talking to him, but I didn't follow through and tell him about what had happened to me. I don't know whether it was because he left or whether it was too much for me to talk about my experiences. It's difficult when you're still in that environment. During these times, I was having a lot of dark thoughts hidden beneath the bubbly exterior. Its only now that I can see I had mental health issues I was grappling with but living in a situation where there was no-one to talk to, no support available. So I put up barriers around myself as a self-preservation tool.

Healthcare

26. I started to self-harm in my first year at the school, after I was sexually assaulted by two older boys. I would cut my wrists and forearms [REDACTED] I wore tubi-grips to cover it up. I don't know whether that was unusual, but nobody asked me anything about it. I didn't need any medical treatment for my injuries. It was all a cry for help. I think I stopped self-harming in year 4 but I carried on drinking and also tried to overdose.
27. There was a sanatorium and I was often trying to stay in it. At one point, the nurse caught me with the thermometer on the radiator as I was trying to prolong my stay in the san. Now, with reflection and perhaps with parental insight, I would question why a child is trying to avoid school and stay in a san, which was a sterile environment, removed from all their friends. But back then, there was no questioning or trying to understand such behaviour. Instead, I just got into more trouble. The nurse didn't ask me anything when she found me with the thermometer on the radiator. She just said that I was obviously fine and that I was being discharged the next day.
28. There was also a doctor at the school. He wasn't very impressive and a bit creepy. He seemed a bit like a fake doctor. He didn't instil much faith that he knew what he was talking about. He didn't seem very up to date and seemed a bit old-school. I heard the boys talking about going with a chest cough and having to drop their trousers, but I didn't see him doing anything creepy. I didn't see a dentist when I was at school. I

remember that I was maybe going to get train-track braces. You had to be seen for regular checks so I didn't end up getting them. It would have been too hard to see the orthodontist because I was at boarding school.

Religious instruction

29. The school was religious and we had morning assembly every day with a bible reading given by a student and a hymn sung. On Sunday's, chapel was compulsory and you could go to Communion at the Michael Kirk which was early in the morning, or the later standard service in the main school chapel. I don't think it followed a particular denomination. It was Christian, possibly Anglican but not Church of Scotland.

Christmas and birthdays

30. My birthday was often in the [REDACTED] holidays. I can't remember whether anything was done to mark birthdays at the school other than kids getting more mail than usual. The school was closed for Christmas and everyone went home. There must have been some celebration of Christmas before the holidays, but I don't remember that other than a carol service.

Visits/family contact

31. The only contact I had with my parents in term-time was from the payphone at school. Sunday was my day to phone them. I can't remember whether I was allowed to use the phone on other days or whether that was just what worked for us. My parents weren't allowed to visit during the term. We were given one exit every term and we could go home for the weekend if we lived close enough to school or had a guardian to stay with. I probably saw my brother every day when we were both at the school and it was reassuring having him there.
32. We sometimes had visiting speakers who gave talks to us, but I think that was just when I reached my final year. We used to get the press coming into the school because [REDACTED]'s son was there. I was never aware of them, but the press did

get in because they sometimes took photos of the pupils. I can't remember seeing any inspectors at the school. I'm not sure that they existed back then.

Running away

33. I'm not aware of anybody running away from Gordonstoun when I was there. We could have done. There was nothing to stop us. It's different now, but back then anybody could walk into the school and into the boarding houses. There were no gates or anything; there didn't appear to be any security at all.

Alcohol

34. There was definitely a drinking culture throughout the school. Back then, there wasn't really much else to do. I started drinking when I was thirteen after the abuse. I took some cans of lager from my dad when I went home but was very sick after drinking it. I would then go into Elgin and ask strangers to buy bottles and keep the change. I would do booze runs for the seniors. I must have been the only one stupid enough to do that. I did the same with cigarettes.

Discipline

35. The school clearly took a strict punitive approach to disciplining students. We were given a rule book when we started at the school. It was a little pocket book that set out all of the rules and what the consequences would be if you broke them. The rules around alcohol were very clear. The first time you were caught drinking, you were put on a half hour chart. You had to carry a chart with you for two weeks and someone had to sign it every half hour when you were awake. It could be signed by a teacher or a colour-bearer, which was like a prefect. If you were caught drinking a second time, you would be rusticated, which was suspension. The third time resulted in expulsion. I was rusticated twice for drinking. I don't know why they didn't expel me. The third time I hadn't been drinking but had returned from a university visit with a bottle in my bag which was searched on arrival. I was due to be made a prefect the following day but instead was sent home for the rest of term. Nobody questioned why I was drinking.

If questions were asked it was never in a way compassionate way that may be conducive to you opening up and being honest about why you might be doing it – it was to find out who else was involved not why you were doing it.

36. Before I went to Gordonstoun, I don't think my behaviour at school had been problematic. If I was disciplined at Gordonstoun, my parents would be informed. A letter would be sent and they'd be phoned if I was put on a half hour chart. I don't recall my parents ever talking about my behaviour other than saying how disappointed they were in me.
37. One of my best friends was expelled in our final year at the school. I was really upset about it and thought the decision was unjust. She was expelled for drinking. It wasn't very commonplace, but there were one or two pupils expelled every year. It was very quick. They would be on the train home the next day.
38. The prefects were called colour-bearers. They were in their final year of school and they were meant to be the upstanding models of the school. They could sign the half hour charts. They could also give out punishments. Other seniors could also give out punishments or report things to colour-bearers so they could then issue punishments.
39. There was a complete punishment system meted out by the seniors to the juniors. That wasn't an official school system, it was just what the seniors did. They called it 'PD', which stood for physical detention. They could issue PD if you didn't do your chores or if you spoke out of turn. Speaking out of turn meant that the senior thought you had been stropky in some way. PD involved running round the tennis court on a Saturday afternoon and forfeiting a trip into Elgin. The amount of time you ran depended on how much PD you had accumulated during the week. I got into trading cigarettes. For every cigarette I gave a senior, I got a minute taken off my punishment of running round the tennis court.
40. The punishment meted out by the senior girls wasn't too bad, but I think it was quite brutal in the boys' houses. They came down especially hard on newcomers, to get them into line and show them their place. They weren't allowed to speak out of turn

and they had to do as they were told. As well as the physical detention PD, there was also physical punishment. There was a lot of physical bullying in the boys' houses. Back then, I didn't question it because I was in it and that was what happened. Now, I think it's absurd that there was a system where seniors were meting out punishment against juniors. They had all that control over the juniors and they had to comply. It was just crazy. It was open to such abuse, particularly in the boys' houses where I think it was a lot worse.

41. It was also accepted or expected that one of the benefits of being a senior was you could get juniors to do things for you. For example, if you left something in the house, you could get a junior to go and get it for you. That was called 'boggging'. It was all within your own house. The power that the seniors had was not overseen by a teacher or any other adult. It was a bit *Lord of the Flies*. They must have kept a record of the punishments issued each week as they knew who had to do the run on a Saturday and for how long.
42. The system was still in place when I became a senior, but I wasn't so much aware of it in my house. I think it was still in place in the boys' houses, but I think it was starting to mellow by that time. When I first started in the mid-1980s, it was still very much in place in the boys houses, with the junior boys getting picked on by the seniors and made to do 'boggging' jobs on command. Sometimes a senior boy would make a junior boy run back up to their house during meal time to get something from their study, or to collect books they'd forgotten for class. By the mid / late 1990s, I think it was mellowing a little, according to my other brother who was there. But I'm not really sure.

Abuse at Gordonstoun

43. I think it was in my first term at the school, when I was 13. I was in a common room, which was called a mixed common room. They were like a big sitting room where everyone, boys and girls from other houses, could meet. I was walking through the room on a Saturday afternoon when two senior boys approached me. They were kind of like 'the lads' and one was [REDACTED]. They asked me if I wanted to go for a

cigarette. I was a little, thirteen year old newbie at school. I was flattered to be asked so I went with them. We went down into these woods. The woods were out of bounds so I knew it was naughty, smoking and going into the woods. You took a risk by going into the woods but I didn't think there was a risk coming from the boys, I just thought we were going to have a cigarette.

44. We were sitting down. I think they'd been drinking. One of them was kissing me and I was pushed onto the ground and held down, while the other one had pulled my pants down. They sexually assaulted me, taking turns on different parts of my body. It was not pleasant, quite terrifying. I was trying to get them off me, but they had pinned my arms down by kneeling on them. It was too hard. I was also scared to shout out because I wasn't supposed to be there. I didn't manage to extract myself – I just felt helpless. After a while they just left.
45. I felt like one boy was more going along with it. He wasn't the main protagonist and I think he said to stop after a time. It was the other one, [REDACTED] who seemed to be more into it going further than the other boy. In the course of my work, they came up with a definition of rape in the international sphere. It was only then that it hit me, that what had happened to me was sexual assault. I think for a long time I had tried shut out and minimise what had happened. I had thought that what I experienced was like a rite of passage and something like that had to be endured. Nowadays, they talk about consent but there was none of that in our education. Despite feeling violated by the experience, I didn't equate it to sexual assault as that was something that happened to others and the classic narrative of rape and sexual assault didn't speak to my experience. But when this international definition came out, it hit me hugely as I realised that happened to me and I wasn't to blame for what happened.
46. It was a really disgusting experience. I'd never kissed a boy before. It was really traumatic for me. I remember going back to the house afterwards. I was showering and trying to clean myself. I sat on the floor in my study, crying underneath my desk, until it was time to go to dinner. I had a sense that life was forever changed for me. Nobody could see it, but I was different. I felt so different and was worried about walking into the refectory for dinner that night as I thought everyone would know and

would blame me. I felt quite alone. It was that sense of not knowing what to do. I had nobody to talk to. I felt really disgusted but I was also blaming myself. I thought that I shouldn't have gone to the woods and what had I been thinking? This self-blaming lasted a long time and I suppose part of me still does.

47. After I was sexually assaulted in my first term, it was a bit of a nightmare. It had big repercussions. I took to drinking. There was a drinking culture at the school anyway, but for me it was definitely to try and numb me; to obliterate what had happened out of my head; I drank excessively to get 'out of it' as that took me away from the present which was a struggle. Sometimes I drank alone and other times with friends. I was self-harming as well, but it wasn't enough to warrant medical treatment. I tried to take an overdose in year 4, the year after the sexual assault. I wrote a farewell letter to my brother and asked someone to send it. I didn't tell him what the two boys had done. I was just in a really dark place. I don't know whether my brother was too scared to do anything when he got the letter. I took a heap of [REDACTED], but then I vomited. I had a diary that I used to write in. It was so dark. I don't know if it was suicidal, but it was full of questions about, "What was the point?" Later on, I didn't want to have it anymore because it was so dark. I burnt it at home.
48. I think all of that action was me crying out for help. But nobody ever seemed to notice or didn't ask any questions to check in on me. The behaviour resulted in me being rusticated. I just feel that side of me was not the person I was, but it tarred my report and people's perception of me. I took on a persona that wasn't really me. It was a way to just survive and get through things.
49. I had to see the boys who had sexually assaulted me around the school for the next three years. I didn't speak to either of them. I just felt vilified. I didn't ever want to see them again. I was worried that they'd say things about me. When I went in to get my breakfast or lunch or dinner and they were there, I would wonder if they were circulating stuff about me. I remember checking their ages when I was a little bit older. I was wondering whether they were old enough to be charged by the police. They were two years above me but they were sixteen.

50. I wasn't involved in any other incidents of abuse when I was at Gordonstoun. There were members of staff who I thought were creepy, but I didn't witness any abuse. These were staff who your gut instinct was telling you to keep a distance from. As I mentioned, I thought that the school doctor was creepy. I thought that another teacher was creepy and he was later convicted at Aberdeen Sheriff Court. He was the physics teacher. He didn't teach me. There were certain staff who you would give a wide berth. He was one of them. The chaplain was another one. He was a bit weird. The [REDACTED] teacher was also a bit strange. It was just that my radar went up. I don't know why though I recall he would pinch some of the [REDACTED] students bottoms in class and think it a joke. It could be a look. It didn't even need to be a comment. I would give them a wide berth. There might have been a bit of chat about that with other pupils, but as far as I recall, there was nothing specific about any allegations of abuse at the time.
51. I also remember that sometimes we would be at the sports centre in the evening swimming. There was this rush at the end to leave before it was time for the place to be locked up as no-one wanted to be stuck in the changing rooms with the teacher on duty as we thought he was a perv and would try and see us naked in the changing rooms. I'm not sure if we spoke about it, it was this palpable sense of urgency and tension to get out the centre before the teacher would come to switch the lights off in the changing rooms.
52. I knew that bullying was going on but I didn't witness the physical bullying. Sometimes you would see senior students picking on junior ones belittling them in front of others or making them do tasks for them. I knew that senior boys would twist younger boys' nipples with pliers. There were also some initiation rites that were given to new students at the beginning of the year. That would continue for those who weren't part of the pack. I know that there was a lot of bullying of boys who didn't fit the norm or weren't considered to be one of the lads. I know about the nipple twisting and I know that there was stuff that happened in the showers, but I didn't witness these things myself.

Reporting of abuse whilst at Gordonstoun

53. After I was sexually assaulted, I felt disgusted but I also blamed myself – if I hadn't gone for the cigarette this would never have happened. I didn't know whether to tell anyone. One of the boys was [REDACTED] and he was very popular. I didn't think anybody would believe me but would believe [REDACTED] instead. It took me about three years to tell my brother about the sexual assault. I didn't really tell anybody at school. I maybe told a couple of friends, but it took me several years to tell them.
54. I was terrified of my housemistress. When I look back, my sense is that I had nobody to talk to. I was more concerned about the repercussions of being in the woods and being out of bounds than what had happened to me. I thought they would ask me what I had been doing in the woods and would not believe me.
55. I do feel aggrieved about the fact that nobody noticed or questioned my behaviour. I've asked myself why I didn't talk to my parents about what had happened, but I didn't see them for a whole term. I couldn't tell them over the phone when I was shoving ten pences into the payphone at school. When you go home, you're kind of a bit like strangers. It was very difficult to find a space to tell my parents and worried if I told my parents, they would tell the school and that would then create more problems for me. So it felt safer to just stay silent. Time goes by and now it's thirty years or so later and I still haven't told them. I felt that they had entrusted the school with my care. The school were providing an education but there was no pastoral care at all.

Life after leaving school

56. I left Gordonstoun in 1990 after five years at the school. I was eighteen. After re-sitting A-levels, I went to university and got a degree. I managed to get a job and had a really good and interesting career and undertook further university legal studies. I met my partner when we were both working overseas. I then settled down and had children.

Reporting of abuse after leaving school

57. I wasn't in touch with Gordonstoun at all after leaving school. I very much felt that it was the end of a chapter and shut the chapter, wanting distance from it all. In about May 2015, there must have been some reports concerning abuse at Gordonstoun in the press as the Head, Simon Reid, wrote to all alumni inviting people to contact the school if they had experiences they wished to notify the school about. Following this, I wrote to the school and was put in touch with Diana Monteith, who was in charge of Pastoral care. It turns out that she was someone I knew from before, which was slightly awkward. She explained she wasn't a trained counsellor but could link me into the school counsellor. I spoke to her a couple of times. The first time was to get information regarding possibly contacting the child protection police about the abuse. However, I did not wish to go to the police, which remains my position. Ms Monteith was very supportive and we agreed that, in the absence of a statement to the police, it would be helpful for me to provide a 'statement' / information to the school. There was a bit of toing and froing between us as we weren't sure what form the statement should take, what the process was etc. I was concerned that if I later decided to refer the matter to the police, then prior 'statements' may be of interest and I questioned whether the notes from our phone call should be simply left as verbatim notes without any amendments so we had an accurate record of our discussions. Unfortunately, the school seemed to have no clear guidelines for this at the time. There were further email exchanges as I wasn't sure what would happen with the information if I gave a statement to the school. I was informed it would be passed onto some Committee that was organised to deal with Old Gordonstounian accounts of abuse. But I was initially reluctant to give it to the Committee as a former boarding house peer was on the committee and I was embarrassed to have my details shared with her. I eventually agreed to have the statement submitted to the Committee.
58. My reason for reaching out to the school in response to Simon Reid's email was that I wanted to tell my story. I felt the time had come to share my experience, and that in doing so, I would be acknowledging it to myself and then be able to let go of the past. Despite having pushed the incident to the back of my mind, I found that I was increasingly being triggered by press reports about sexual abuse and I found this

difficult to deal with, like it unhinged me when I had managed for so long to compartmentalise things. So I wanted to give information to the school to help with closure, but my sense is that the school hadn't thought about what they would then do with it. I gave the information but I don't recall receiving a follow-up explaining what would happen to the information. When I queried this, I was informed that it had been passed to the Committee and that they *believed* it would be handled with care and sensitivity and stored on file. While things have no doubt changed with data protection legislation, around 2015 when I was in contact with the school, there didn't appear to be a clear process for handling such information. Given the sensitivity of the information, I thought the school might subsequently reach out to those who provided such information explaining what would happen to it.

59. During this time, Ms Monteith also advised that there was some other organisation in Scotland that I could write to called the National Confidential Forum and she provided me with the website for the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry. The school also offered counselling, but it was a bit tricky to do it within school hours given time-zone differences.

60. Gordonstoun then engaged the Centre of Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS), at Strathclyde University, for a consultation on the school's response to survivors of historic abuse. I thought this was a really positive proactive step taken by the school. The centre arranged various consultations with survivors and received feedback that was incorporated into a report, with numerous recommendations, which was submitted to Gordonstoun around early-mid 2018. I don't recall hearing whether any of the recommendations were ever adopted. They were talking about doing an apology and some kind of memorial. There were various different things being spoken about. In view of my experience with the school, I flagged the need for first responder and trauma informed training, while also addressing the fact some survivors live outside the UK. I don't know whether any of that was taken up by the school. I recall receiving at some point a link to their 'Historical Child Abuse Policy', which I was glad to see and to know that they are taking some action, with some staff being trained in this area and a clear process for handling cases of historic abuse.

61. In relation to the school's initial handling of historic abuse around 2015, my sense is that, when the school was first dealing with it, they had little awareness of what it might mean to send out emails that could trigger people. Suddenly, in your inbox comes an email from the school alerting us to historic abuse and asking people who may have information to contact the school if they wished to do so. There didn't seem to be an awareness that the opening line might trigger somebody. That was something that I felt really strongly about. The school was trying to do the right thing but my view was that they didn't really seem to have awareness about issues such as triggering, or the re-trauma that may arise from contacting the school. It seemed to me that they had taken this action of reaching out to alumni without perhaps having staff properly trained or, in the absence of trained staff, bringing in consultants to set up a system at the school.
62. My situation was different because it was peer-on-peer. It's different than abuse by a teacher, who is in a position of trust. It's still abuse but I think a lot of the focus has been on the abuse of trust by a teacher entrusted with a legal responsibility over children. I'm sure peer-on-peer sexual abuse goes on and I'm not the only person at school who has experienced that kind of situation. I understand the school now has a focus on pastoral care and a much better well-being system in place that enables children to come forward and raise concerns, which is reassuring.
63. I know that a general email went out to the school community to say that they were sorry for things that happened in the past. I haven't been contacted after giving my statement. Things sort of dropped off after my information was passed to the committee dealing with historic abuse and I wasn't keeping track of it all. At the time, I would have liked a personalised apology and an admission that things were wrong with the school back then, particularly the lack of pastoral support. I realise there are various legal implications so there may be concern by the school as to what they say. However, it seems they could have responded more fully and appropriately back then when they first started dealing with historic abuse. While I appreciate the school was trying to address the issue, and I am thankful for this, my sense is that they were reaching out to former students as a response to media reports and wanting people to contact the school, but then had nothing clearly in place when people did contact the

school. It takes courage to contact the school and share difficult, deeply personal experiences with them and it is then concerning to not know what happens to that information. However, while critical of the school at that time, I recognise that they do now have a policy in place that sets out processes for providing information to the school and avenues of support. Further, I was fortunate to recently meet with the current Principal Lisa Kerr and I am grateful for her heartfelt apology for the past abuse. She also explained that my incident had been included in the school's submission to this Inquiry and that the information provided to school was secure. I am grateful for this reassurance. I hope the school will continue to reach out to its alumni, particularly those who are survivors of abuse, to provide further updates, as relevant, of what they are doing to address historic abuse and current student well-being and protection.

64. The school gave me the name of a police officer in Elgin who was dealing with historic cases of abuse. They told me that they would only inform the police if I provided the name of my abuser as they have an obligation to pass the name on to the police. I didn't tell them the name, although they could have deduced who it was from the information that I gave them. I'm very clear that I don't want to go down the route of reporting what happened to the police. I've seen in my partner's professional life how horrendous the criminal justice system can be. What happened to me was such a long time ago and my memory isn't great. I don't want to be faced with a court proceeding.
65. I'm part of a closed Facebook group from the school. Some people have been sharing things on that. I've been really shocked by it. We were there, all suffering in our own way, but nobody knew. We didn't even know amongst each other. I was really surprised to read of some of the experiences that some of my peers had in their houses with teachers.

Impact

66. While I was at school, the sexual assault was present on my mind a lot of the time. I really tried to bury it. I buried it for a long time but it would come out with excessive

drinking. I might tell a friend what had happened. I would have heightened anxiety in certain situations but bury it more and more.

67. Although I stopped self-harming in year four of school, my drinking continued. I would say now that I recognise I haven't had the healthiest relationship with alcohol. But it's getting better. I don't binge anymore and I do dry nights each week, but the excesses lasted well into my twenties, early thirties. It was my crutch.
68. The sexual assault on me has been ever-present in my life and has certainly impacted me when I think about key moments in my life. I had a bit of a breakdown at university and I was prescribed anti-depressants. It was triggered by one thing after another being stacked up after the sexual assault. I have a lack of confidence and belief in myself. I definitely suffer from anxiety and probably a bit of depression. I think it has made me be more cynical and distrusting of people. I'm reluctant to get medication because there's still stigma attached to that. That's probably my Gordonstoun background as well, you just persevere and get on with it.
69. I did have counselling for about two years but I didn't think I could talk to the counsellor about the sexual assault. Although I know that I'm not to blame for what happened, I think there's still a part of me that does. It's that silly voice in my head that makes me feel shame for what happened. The rational mind knows that I'm not to blame, but it's hard. I'm very private so a part of me feels that there is no need to talk and share it. I have a daughter who is twelve so I'm now rethinking that in my own head. I'm wondering whether I need to share my experience with her from a preventative point of view. I then get really angry because the statistics about abuse on women are as bad as they are.

I think I'd put what happened at peace – or at least compartmentalised it sufficiently to keep it at bay - until the closed Facebook group for people at Gordonstoun started. My brother told me that I might want to reach out and join it. When abuse at Gordonstoun came up in the news in 2015 or whenever it was, it was popping up a lot in the press. I found that really triggering. I was reliving what happened. That was when I thought that I needed to do something about it and put it at rest. I thought that

giving the statement to the school would do that but it didn't. I'm hoping that the Inquiry will help with that. I've been in touch with the Inquiry for years now. I'd send the first email and push it away. It's taken that long to get to this point. Even now I feel anxious about sharing it; there's this sense of losing control by letting go of my story but I hope it will also bring relief.

70. Generally, I'm in a much better space now. I have a really supportive partner. I think the one thing that also helps is knowing that I'm not alone. At least now there is a narrative that we haven't had for a long time. People are starting to talk out, particularly with the MeToo movement. I was engaged in work looking at issues of sexual abuse within the context of universities and their institutional responses. Going down that route of work was confronting and the statistics are alarming, but it was also reassuring to know that I'm not alone in what I experienced at school. There is a bigger societal problem regarding sexual abuse.
71. I haven't told my parents what happened to me at school. I think about it all the time and wonder whether I should or I shouldn't. They're now in their eighties. I feel like it would probably devastate them that I haven't told them for so long. I think it might just cause them more harm and in a way I wonder what the point of telling them would be? They would blame themselves and question our relationship. I don't think what happened has affected my relationship with them, but I think the fact that I moved overseas was me getting away from everything, putting distance between that chapter. Now, as I'm reaching closure and my parents are ageing, I have a huge sense of wanting to make up for lost time. That's very difficult when you're far away.
72. I think my experience affected relationships. I'm close to the males in my family. I'm better now, but for a long time I distrusted and felt threatened by men, unless they were gay. I'm now in a safe relationship. I'm not in any environment where I could be at risk and so I also don't feel threatened like I used to constantly feel. I have anxiety and am suspicious of many peoples motives, which can impact relationships both personal and professional. I think it's possible that what happened did impact upon me as a parent. My partner says that I'm tough on my son. Maybe there's some subconscious bias that I need to be aware of at times. I have thought about that since

he was born, that I need to make sure I don't let what happened at Gordonstoun taint my relationship with him.

Records

73. I do have my records from my time at Gordonstoun. I looked at them a few years ago when I was doing a tidy out. They're interesting to read, knowing my story and the fact that nobody asked what was going on. There would be comments like, "She is her own worst enemy and doesn't help herself." It is a bit difficult to read that kind of thing. I do feel slightly wronged, although that might be too strong a word. It's not the person that I was. I wouldn't be that person anyway because I went to boarding school. You change because you're severed from your family. Having the sexual assault on top of that made me change even more. I felt different immediately and there was nothing I could do to undo what happened to me.

Lessons to be learned

74. There was no sense of pastoral care at all. The school might have understood the concept of a duty of care in a broader sense, for example safety on expeditions and things like that. My behaviour became quite bad. I think that was because of what happened to me in my first year. There was never any attempt to understand the behaviour – just punishment for the wrong behaviour. My behaviour was definitely a cry for help and nobody asked what was going on.
75. It's important to look at the behaviour and try to understand the reasons for it, the broader contextual issues fuelling it. People don't just act for no reason. There's always a reason behind the behaviour. They need to dive deep into that and ask the questions. Schools need to have the appropriate staff who are trained to do that. They need to have well-being counsellors or somebody who people can turn to. Back then, I think we only had Esther Rantzen and Childline to call.

76. There should be policies and procedures in place at schools to ensure there is an awareness about these things. Children need to know what is appropriate and what is not appropriate behaviour, with age appropriate consent and respectful relationship education programs being offered early on. When I was at school there was definitely a lack of respect about a person's body, with some boys routinely feeling free to give girls wedgies and other physical acts. If you tried to call it out you were picked on and ridiculed, with the behaviour towards you being worse. There was one girl who tried to stand up to the lads at school and she was given a really hard time, with them giving her wedgies, twisting her bra and so on. This sent a message to the rest of us to just stay silent. There was certainly no culture of respect and keeping your hands to yourself. I know that parents play a role in that, but schools do as well, particularly in a boarding school where the school is acting *in loco parentis*. My first tutor was a male. There was no way that I could approach him with personal concerns. Schools should look at the staff they've got and what is an appropriate assignment of genders in different age groups across the houses. That's not to say that girls shouldn't be able to talk to a male teacher, but if they're the sole point of contact for pastoral care and the girl has just started menstruating or something like that, they may be less inclined to open up to a male teacher than a female teacher.
77. I'm concerned about the processes for handling historic abuse around 2015. I thought that it was important to give a statement to the school, but I don't recall receiving any follow-up about what they did with the sensitive information at that time. As mentioned, I recently learnt that my experience was included in the School's submission to this Inquiry and is being stored securely, which is a relief. The school appears to have learnt from the past; it seems to have a strong pastoral support and well-being program. Hopefully age and culturally appropriate education on consent, respectful relationships, and other important topics are also embedded across its teachings.
78. I felt different immediately after being sexually assaulted, but nobody else noticed. That's the thing with all sexual abuse. If you get beaten up and you have a black eye or something, it's obvious that you've been hurt and people reach out to see if you're ok. The less visible injury or pain is a lot harder. There needs to be an awareness that people may be carrying their own trauma or some other unresolved issue that is

impacting them on one level or another. People need to take the time and have that awareness, particularly if they're in charge of students.

Hopes for the Inquiry

- 79. I hope there's recognition that there's a generation of adults out there who went to boarding school and some are consequently carrying a lot of trauma. There's a perception of them being elite, entitled and privileged. Perhaps they were, but a lot of them are carrying trauma on various levels for various reasons. Just being away from the home in quite a brutal environment was traumatic. It's easy to diminish it, but I think it's real. I hope that the Inquiry will bring awareness that there have been abuses on various levels, not just the headline grabbing abuse by teachers on children but also peer-on-peer, and senior to junior.

- 80. I also hope that it doesn't happen again. I hope that there are systems in place that will change the culture and enable children to feel safe and be safe at all types of schools, knowing that it is safe to speak out and that their voices will be heard.

- 81. Finally, I hope that there will be some form of apology and redress available for survivors of historic abuse, with consideration of possible reparations or a trust fund for victims, and that there will continue to be an opportunity for others to come forward to have their story heard. I hope that their shared experiences will serve as a historic record as to what happened and that, in doing so, it brings a sense of validation and closure to their pain and suffering.

- 82. 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..........

Dated..... 13 February 2023