

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

CDE

Support person present: No

1. My name is **CDE** My date of birth is **1946** and I am presently seventy-one years of age. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My father was a professional election agent for what was then known as the Conservative and Unionist Party and he moved around a lot. At one point we lived in Glasgow and then around 1956 we went to live in Northumberland where he had taken a job.
3. I think the plan would have been to put me into the English educational system and initially I went to a prep school in Morpeth. Unfortunately, I failed the “eleven-plus” examination for secondary education in England, so my parents decided to find a school in Scotland for me. They had the idea that the Scottish education system was the best in the world; my mother was a teacher and she was aware of these things.
4. They tried to get me into Dollar Academy, but that didn’t work so I was put down for an examination for Keil School in Dumbarton and managed to get a half bursary. My

younger brother [REDACTED] also went, but he left after a couple of years. He couldn't stand it.

Keil School, Dumbarton

5. I was sent to Keil School in Dumbarton in 1959 and went into the second year because I was thirteen at the time. My brother went into first year. There must have been around one hundred and fifty boys there, no girls. All the boys were boarders, there were no day pupils.
6. The school was set up by a chap called Sir William Mackinnon who wanted to create an endowment for boys from Highland communities. To get in, boys had to have some connection to the Highlands, however boys were from all over, including out in the colonies.
7. When I arrived, the headmaster was a chap called A. H. Robertson, who had been there for many years. He left in April 1962, when a Mr Jeffs took over.
8. All the pupils at Keil were in what were called "squads". There were twelve or thirteen squads in total and each squad consisted of twelve boys from all the different years. Each squad was under the charge of a "chief" and his "deputy". The chief was a senior boy who was in his sixth year and his deputy was in the year below.
9. The best way that I can describe Keil School is that it was an unkind environment. It was a brutal existence being at a boys' boarding school.

Routine at Keil School, Dumbarton

First day

10. I can still see in my mind's eye the taxi that dropped [REDACTED] and I off pulling away in a cloud of dust with my mother in it. There was no welcoming ceremony or anything like that, we just went into assembly and were assigned numbers and squads. Everybody was called by their surname, even by other boys.

Mornings and bedtime

11. For the first two years I was at Keil, I shared a dormitory of twenty-five boys who were all in the same year as myself. The dormitory was in a building called Mason House, which was on two floors. In second year we slept in a room upstairs and in third year we slept downstairs. I think the chiefs had their own room somewhere in the building.
12. At seven o'clock in the morning, one of the chiefs would come into the dormitory carrying an empty brass shell casing. To wake us up, he would beat the shell with a stick.
13. I don't remember washing in the morning, although I do remember when we did wash there was never any hot water. We would be given quarter-of-an-hour after waking to make our beds and get dressed. All our sheets had to be nicely folded and placed squarely on top of the bed, exposing the mattress. Then we would go on what was called "orderly duty".
14. Orderly duty would take place until eight o'clock, at which time we would go to the assembly hall. Once in the assembly hall, everybody would sit in their allotted place, along a row with the rest of the members of their squad. Junior boys would be at one end and senior boys at the other. As you progressed through the school, you would move up the row. There would be morning prayers and maybe a hymn or two and then everybody would troop through to the dining room for breakfast.
15. After breakfast there was another period of orderly duty and then we would start school at nine o'clock.

Mealtimes/Food

16. Food was not particularly good at Keil, but it was edible. Each squad sat together at a long refectory table in the dining hall, with the seating of the boys and the order in which food was taken being strictly hierarchical according to year. Our food was brought to us in a big aluminium dish and the chief would take his share then pass it down the table for everyone else to help themselves in turn.

Clothing/uniform

17. The uniform at Keil was a green blazer and short trousers. They didn't like long trousers for some reason and so there would be boys of all ages, including those in fifth year, going into Dumbarton in what they called long shorts. Formal dress was a kilt, which we wore on a Sunday.
18. Some boys, myself included, had long trousers hidden away, which we changed into when we went out of the school. I would wait until I was some distance away before changing, in case I got caught. It was forbidden, but nobody wanted to be seen in shorts.

School

19. The school was contained within Keil itself and I can't remember there being more than half a dozen teachers. All of them resided on the premises, except one who was the history master. My classroom was also within Mason House, where my dormitory was. We would be in class from nine o'clock until lunchtime.
20. The school was obsessed with rugby and so after lunch, between two o'clock and four o'clock in the afternoon, everybody had to go outside and play. This was generally supervised by the senior boys. I wasn't particularly good at rugby and after a short period in the junior team, I was relegated to a team called the "casuals".

21. When we came back in about four, we would go for a "spray", the word "shower" didn't exist, and then we went back into class for lessons for an hour or two. After lessons we went to the dining hall for evening meal.
22. After evening meal, between roughly seven o'clock and nine o'clock, we would go back into our classrooms for "prep", or homework. This was also supervised by either a chief or a deputy. After prep, there was another assembly, where we would have prayer before going to our dormitories.

Leisure time

23. I wasn't an athletic boy and didn't enjoy the sports activities we were given. I remember breaking bounds in third year. During the summer months, while the other boys were playing sports I would slip out of school and use the heavy foliage that was around the grounds to go to the local shop. When I got there I bought big bags of crisps to sell to the other boys.

Religious Instruction

24. The Catholic faith did not have a look in at Keil, it was entirely protestant. We said prayers twice daily and all attended the Church of Scotland in Dumbarton on a Sunday.

Trips/Holidays

25. Everybody was at school over the weekend, although they had a system of what were called "permissions", whereby you could go out on a Saturday afternoon. Every boy had three permissions each term and about one o'clock on a Saturday afternoon, after a roll-call, could go wherever they wanted provided they were back for assembly at either six or seven o'clock. I would use my permissions to go up to Glasgow on the train and see a film.

26. In addition to permissions, we were also given other periods we could leave the school for a short time, rather than a whole afternoon. I remember one time going boating with a friend whose parents stayed in Alexandria.
27. I wasn't any good at cricket, but I managed to get the job of scoring and got away with the team. I also managed to get in the junior rugby team and went out of the school with them too to play other teams. It was such a huge relief just to get out.

Birthdays and Christmas

28. Birthdays were not celebrated at all and we would go home to our parents for Christmas.

Pocket money

29. A trusted boy would be tasked with allocating pocket money. On a Friday night, we would all form a queue outside the school office where this boy would give us all one shilling and sixpence.
30. I think I was possibly a boy who attracted attention. In my first year at Keil, I started a [REDACTED] business by purchasing ten shillings worth of [REDACTED] in Dumbarton and selling them at the school for a penny each. By Saturday night I had a pound, so I kept it running until someone eventually put a stop to it when I was in fourth year. I think it must have been some of the chiefs, but I don't know who. While I was elsewhere, some person or persons sneaked into my room and bent the door of my locker back so that they were able to reach in and remove the cashbox I had. It was secured in the school safe until the end of term, when I got all the cash back.

Healthcare

31. I don't remember ever going to the doctor or the dentist. There was a school matron, but she was not an approachable person. One time, I had eaten a whole grapefruit

and felt terrible afterwards. I went to see the matron, who was tending to some other boys at the time. All she did was stick a thermometer in my mouth. As I stood, I quickly dipped the thermometer in a jug of hot Ribena and put it back in my mouth. The matron came over to see me and when she looked at the thermometer she slapped my face. The headmaster must have been told, because he later informed me my parents would be getting charged for a new thermometer. They were indeed later charged seven shillings and sixpence.

32. I recall another occasion that matron sent me into Glasgow for an eye examination.

Running away

33. If anyone ran away there would generally be an announcement by the headmaster, Mr Robertson, saying their "parents have been asked to remove him from the school". I never ran away from Keil myself. I was tempted, but I considered there was such a huge moral imperative to stay in the school that running away would be a sign of defeat.

Chores

34. Every morning, about quarter-past-seven, each boy was given a specific duty to do in the school, known as "orderly duty". This could be cleaning a room or a hall, or whatever. I did different orderly duties in second, third and fourth years, although they were all inside the school building, cleaning and sweeping the assembly hall and such like. Maintenance of the school was kept up by the boys in this way.

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Discipline

37. The day-to-day running of the school, the discipline, order and the maintenance, was done almost entirely by the chiefs and their deputies. Even some aspects of the administration was handled by the boys. I was later told this was called the "Keil system". I think the idea was that the boys in the upper years would discipline the boys in the lower years because they had had it done to themselves. I understand that a similar set up operated in other schools.
38. The school applied a low-grade punishment called "NH", which I believe stood for natural history. NH was given for essentially just being a boy, perhaps being a little insubordinate or cheeky.
39. There was a big, hardback, NH book kept in the school office and each boy had their own page. As any NH was given, it was entered in the book. Originally NH would have been used to have boys carry out work in the school gardens. I remember some boys would occasionally work off their NH by doing some work in the garden, but I never did. There was a school gardener, who lived in the lodge house at the entrance to the school, who was supported in his work by boys who had been given NH and also by boys who had gardening as their orderly duty.
40. Respect for authority was drilled into you and more serious offences were dealt with by the administering of what was called the "peech", by a chief or his deputy. This involved the offender bending over while either four or six blows were delivered with a flexible gym shoe to the boy's backside, protected only by his regulation shorts or pyjamas. The importance of being able to take it "like a man" was crucial.

41. There was also formal discipline delivered by the teachers, the “tawse”, or belt, was just accepted as part of the regime. I got the tawse a couple of times that I remember, but I wasn’t unduly bothered by that. There was a [REDACTED] teacher called **QRT** [REDACTED] who was notorious for his strapping. He used to strap right up people’s arms and open up their arms. I don’t know if it was recorded as such, however in my experience at least, discipline was generally so good in class that corporal punishment was rarely used.
42. There was no emotional support system at Keil whatsoever. The whole idea of the time in sending a boy to boarding school was to make them stand on their own feet without the emotional support of their parents. If a boy displayed any weakness whatsoever, they would be labelled a “Chivers”, after Chivers jelly. It was incumbent on all boys to maintain a face and show strength.
43. The only time I remember experiencing any kindness was in third year when the history teacher asked me after class if I had any problems. I just told him I didn’t. It was the only act of kindness I can honestly say I ever experienced there. There was no love and there was nobody who could be considered approachable. You were supposed to just bottle any emotions you might have felt. Anybody that didn’t would be despised.

Abuse at Keil School, Dumbarton

44. After I had been back in the school for three weeks at the start of my fourth year, I had accrued twenty-one hours of NH. I’m not sure what I had done, I think it would most likely have been insubordination. They must have been giving me an hour a day on average.
45. After Sunday assembly, when there was a roll call to make sure everybody was back in the school, I was told to go up to the chiefs’ dormitory. It was in an annex abutting the school and could be accessed from their common room. I had no other notice

that I was in trouble and I was not aware of the consequences of the build-up of my NH penalty.

46. I did so and when I got to the common room, the chiefs were all waiting for me. I was put into their dormitory and told to wait in there while they decided what to do with me. They then called me out and told me to grasp the lower rungs of an old chest of drawers. They never told me what was going to happen, but then they each took a turn to hit me on the backside, over my shorts, with a gym shoe. There were twelve chiefs and this, I later learned, was what was called a "chiefs' peeching".
47. I think it is fair to say that they all had intended taking a turn, however I started struggling after about six strikes. They were holding me down and trying to stop me wriggling about and then they literally threw me out of the common room. I can remember flying through the air like yesterday. Afterwards, I actually felt slightly ashamed of myself that I hadn't been able to take the full punishment that had been intended for me.
48. I was told that if I got any more NH, I would be up in front of them again. I did actually get a couple of hours of NH for some misdemeanour and I remember worrying that I was going to be called up again. I wasn't and was so relieved.
49. I was completely black and blue on my backside and couldn't sit down without pain for about a week. My brother has since told me that he remembers me showing him the bruising when I went home at Christmas. I never showed my parents. To do so would have been a betrayal of the school and would have been considered to have been clying.
50. On another occasion, the chief in charge of my squad, a chap called [REDACTED], decided to deny me food. I don't recall why. As the dish of food went round the table, it passed me by and I had nothing to eat for several days. I had to just sit and watch everyone eat. On one occasion [REDACTED] caught me stealing some milk and gave me two hours NH for deceit. On the Sunday I eventually cracked and tears welled up in my eyes. At that point [REDACTED] stopped, he realised he had broken

me. That was the first and only time I cried in front of my peers, it just wasn't done in school.

51. There was occasional bullying, although I was not bullied. I wouldn't say that bullying was ingrained in the school, but it did exist. When I got to fourth year, I sat next to a chap called [REDACTED], who was in fifth year. My recollection is that every night at the dinner table he would turn round and punch me on the shoulder. This went on for some time. I never flinched, I just took it because that was part of the culture of the place. [REDACTED] and his deputy were there, but they never intervened and never did anything about it.
52. Homosexuality was absolutely despised, there was a huge prejudice and such a taboo against it. There was a chap called [REDACTED] who was labelled as a homosexual and who was subjected to verbal abuse.

Leaving Keil School, Dumbarton

53. At the end of my third year, in 1961, I asked my parents to do something about my unhappiness at Keil. I persuaded them to find me a place elsewhere and they got me into somewhere at Stannington near Morpeth. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
54. I went there for the start of term in September of that year, however I only actually stayed for a few days before I ran away because I didn't like it. I intervened to stop some bullying and ended up getting bullied myself. I made my way back to my parents and was sent back to Keil a few days later.
55. When I went back to Keil, instead of going back to the dormitory, I was put in a small room with one other boy. It was slightly better, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I wrote to my parents asking that this be my last term at Keil. I still have a copy of that letter, which I sent on the 11 October that year, 1961.

56. I left Keil in the summer of 1962, after my parents moved up from Northumberland to Clarkston in Glasgow and I then went to day school at Eastwood Senior Secondary. I had left Keil with just two O-levels and had fallen so far behind that I had to repeat fourth year. I remember thinking Eastwood was so soft.

Life after being in care

57. Eastwood was a great school and I loved it. I was there for a couple of years and, after gaining more qualifications I went to Aberdeen University in 1965. I studied law for three years at Aberdeen and then two in Edinburgh and managed to get two degrees.
58. I got a legal apprenticeship in Glasgow and I have been in Glasgow ever since, practising as a solicitor. I later met my wife and we now have two sons.

Impact

59. Since that day in the autumn of 1961, nobody has meted out such physical pain to me and I am still haunted by the memory of my experience more than fifty years after the event.
60. I now realise, with the benefit of hindsight, that I was never taught all the things at Keil that I wish I had been. The school had started off specialising in technology and I wasn't really a technical boy. I eventually managed to catch up, however that was only through my own initiative.
61. It brutalises you going to a boarding school like Keil. I developed an emotional detachment and I wasn't a nice person. It was part of the scene for somebody to be verbally cruel to you and you to others. I could never understand after I left why I would say something and somebody would take offence.

62. I thought that the way parents had to deal with children was how I had been treated at Keil. I smacked my children and I know now that they resented it. I now find that a source of shame, but at the time I thought it was the normal thing to do.

63. [REDACTED]

Reporting of Abuse

64. I have never reported anything that happened to me at Keil to any of the authorities, either at the time or since. I simply had to accept that the pain inflicted was part of a punishment system over which I had no choice. There was no place to run to and no agency to which I could complain.

Documents

65. Over the years I have managed to gather together various documents of my time at Keil, including some photographs, report cards and letters I wrote, should the Inquiry wish to view them. I have never, however, applied for any records as such.

Lessons to be Learned

66. I think the fact that there was no support system for the boys at school was wrong. That was the way it was in Scotland, you just had to thole it, but there should have been something.

Other information

- 67. I have returned to Keil school for a few dinner reunions, the last time being in 2010. I recall speaking to another chap then who remembered the boy [REDACTED], the boy who kept hitting me on the shoulder.

- 68. 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..... CDE [REDACTED]

Dated..... *23 April 2018*