

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

CRR
[REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is CRR [REDACTED] My date of birth is the [REDACTED] 1955. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going to boarding school

2. My parents' names were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Both my parents are deceased. I have 4 brothers and three sisters. I am the second oldest child. My brother [REDACTED] is a year older than me and the youngest would be in his late 30's. I do not see any of my brothers and sisters.
3. My father was in the army and moved around the country. My mother was suffering from a bi polar disorder and had mental health issues. We ended up in Lockerbie and my father decided that he would send [REDACTED] and me to a private school. Up to that time we had attended schools the length and breadth of England and Scotland depending on where my father was stationed.
4. I was the only child to go to Queen Victoria School as my oldest brother [REDACTED] didn't pass the exams and my other siblings went to different schools depending on where we were staying at the time. I recall we sat the entrance exam at Queen Victoria School and when we got back to Lockerbie I was told that I had passed the exam but [REDACTED] had failed. I think that a month later I went off to school at Queen Victoria School.

Boarding at Queen Victoria School, Dunblane.

5. The school was only for the children of serving members of the armed force. My father was serving in The Kings Own Scottish Borderers. It was an all-boys boarding school. I think it was set up to encourage the boys to go into the military when they left the school. We would be instructed in military training such as marching, musical bands and boxing.
6. It was run by normal teaching staff but there was the odd ex-soldier including one called Spike who served with my father. I recall that members of my father's regiment used to come to the school and encourage you to consider an army career. These men were from the Kings Own Scottish Borderers and when they left they would always give you a "couple of quid" which came in handy for spending in the tuck shop.
7. I think that I was one of the youngest when I started at the school aged ten. There was a junior school on the same campus as the senior school with about eighty pupils. I attended the junior school before I was due to go the main school and I think that is where I started off. I was in the junior school for about two years and never managed to get to the senior school after there was an incident and my father became involved.
8. I think that in junior school I was in a dormitory called Lyndoch. There may have been three other dormitories with about twenty boys all in the junior school. I don't recall many teachers at the boarding school but there was always someone there for lights out. There were only one or two members of staff in the boarding house. If there were any issues I assume that you would go to a teacher but I have no recollection of ever having to go and get a teacher for any reason. I can't recall the names of the teaching staff apart from "Spike".

9. I can remember that I was in Lyndoch boarding house and that I would go into the house and turn to the left and that is where my dormitory was. There was a games room with table tennis. I spent a lot of time in the dormitory socialising and keeping the room clean.
10. As far as I was aware my father was not paying any fees for me to be at Queen Victoria School. My father was very tight with money as he spent a lot on alcohol. I don't think that I had to buy any of the kit that was provided.

Routine at Queen Victoria College, Dunblane

First day and early experiences.

11. I can remember the first experience and I was feeling lost and homesick. There was no one to sit you down and tell you what to expect. I was sent to go and collect my kit. You were directed to what you had to do and there was no explanation as to why.
12. After that first day you just followed the other boys and did what you were told to do. For the first six months I felt very homesick because this was something completely new and I was away from my family.

Mornings and bedtime

13. The bugle would sound in the morning at six. You would get up, get dressed and washed and then go for your breakfast. There was a timetable that you stuck to and told you where you were supposed to be at any time. It would tell you when you had classes or were doing sport.
14. You had lunch and then it was the same in the afternoon. You would get your evening meal and then you had to do an hour of prep in the classroom. After that it was off to bed. Bed was quite early about eight o'clock.

15. Every morning there was an inspection and the staff would check that your bed had been made correctly and that you could see your face in the reflection from your polished shoes.
16. All the beds were on the right and left hand sides of the dormitory and there was a table in the middle. Each pupil had a small wardrobe for keeping their kit in. I didn't have any personal property. I don't recall much supervision of the dormitories through the night unless there was a lot of noise being made and the teachers were woken.
17. There was a dormitory captain and it was usually the oldest boy. I was due to become a dorm captain but the dormitory captain from the year before had failed to pass his exams to get into senior school and so he had to stay in the dormitory for another year and the school let him stay on as dormitory captain.
18. We had to attend church every Sunday and there would be a procession of the colours carried by flag bearers who would walk down the middle of the church. I think that there were five flags. There were the four house colours and the British flag. You had to be in your best kit for the church on a Sunday.
19. You were also trained to march on the parade square on the campus. If there were visiting dignitaries you would have to parade in front of them. It was a major part of your schooling and we had to practise to get it right. At the end of term we would parade and then throw our hats in the air.

Mealtimes / Food

20. I know that we had three meals a day but I can't recall much about the food. I know that the whole school would have their lunch in the main building. It included all the senior school. I don't think that it was good quality but I don't recall being punished for not eating it.

21. There was a tuck shop where you could buy extra food. It was up to the parents to give the money over and the teachers would hand it out. It was good when the soldiers from my father's regiment came to visit and gave us a "couple of quid" meaning we could afford sweets from the tuck shop.

Chores.

22. You had to keep your bed space clean and the bed clothes had to be folded in the correct manner. Your kit all had to be laid out for inspection and had to be kept spick and span. Your shoes were highly polished.

Washing / bathing

23. I know that there were showers and bathing rooms but I can't honestly remember what they were like. I know that I did use the facilities as you were playing rugby and other sports that you would be required to clean yourself afterwards
24. The showers were communal and after PE or sporting events you would have to shower. I don't think that the showers were supervised by staff. There was no set time to go and shower. Your soap and towel was provided by the school.

Clothing / uniform

25. I was issued with the number [REDACTED] and I had to get all my equipment labelled with that number so that when it went in for laundry it would be identified as being your property and would be returned to you.
26. You were given socks and underwear, trousers and a kilt. A red jacket, a greatcoat and I recall some very itchy vests. You were given shoes and a PE kit. You also had pyjamas.

Schooling.

27. My classroom was in the same building above my dormitory. I think that there were four or five different classrooms but to access them you had to go outside and up some stairs. There were a few different teachers who taught different subjects. I think that there were some teachers who had living quarters on the top floor of Lyndoch House. I recall that because on one occasion I had to go to a teacher's room to receive punishment by the slipper.

28. The standard of education at Queen Victoria School was very high and the reason I know this is because when I left the school and resumed my education in the school system in England I was at a much higher standard because the Scottish educational system was much more advanced than their English counterparts.

Trips / Holidays

29. I recall going on a trip to a big country house called The Binns but I have no idea where that was.

30. You went home for holiday when school term was over. You would also go home at half term. My dad always came and collected me. Some children whose parents were abroad with the forces would stay on at the school.

Birthdays and Christmas

31. I was never at the school at Christmas time and my birthday was during the school holidays so I can't recall any birthday celebrations.

Leisure time and activities.

32. At the weekends you go into Dunblane but you would be required to wear your kilt and blazer. I think that if you did go to Dunblane you would visit the cathedral as there wasn't much else to do. I recall that every time I went into the cathedral I would sign the visitor's book.
33. You could also go to the rugby field and have a kick about with the other lads. There were no societies as such but I did do highland dancing and was due to perform before The Queen but left just prior to that happening. I was totally gutted that I was not able to perform before the Queen. All the boys had to learn a musical instrument or do highland dancing.
34. There was also a swimming pool on the premises which could be used by all the boys. Swimming also formed part of the school curriculum.

Visits / Inspections

35. My parents never came to visit me at the school. I don't recall any visitors to the school apart from the soldiers from my father's regiment. They would give you money and tell you not to tell any of the staff.
36. These visits from the soldiers convinced me that all I wanted to do was to join the army. I do recall a visit from Sir Alec Douglas-Home who had been Prime Minister. He had a look round the school. I don't remember any formal school inspection in the time I was there. Quite a few dignitaries visited the school. At different times.

Healthcare

37. If you became ill you would be looked after until you were better. I recall that we had regular check-ups and inoculations which were given by a man in a white coat. I don't recall seeing a dentist.

Running away

38. I never ran away from school as I knew what the consequences would be having heard the scream from some boys being punished for running away. I think that those boys were just homesick and wanted to be at home. I didn't see what was happening to them I only heard the screams.

Bullying

39. I have no specific memories of bullying amongst the boys at Queen Victoria School and I would have to say that I encountered more incidents of bullying in the school systems of Scotland and England. The only person I recall who was in any way a bully was the dormitory captain [REDACTED]. He used his size to bully some of the boys who didn't stand up to him.

Punishment

40. If you stepped out of line and did something that the teachers didn't like you would be physically punished. There were different methods of punishment and I was hit with a cricket bat and also a slipper. You would be hit on your backside. There was also a school belt and I think I got that as well. I may be mixing that up with other schools I attended but I think that I got belted on my hand.
41. On one occasion I was in the classroom and one of the boys threw a piece of paper at me. I picked it up and threw it back and was caught by the teacher. It meant that after I had gone to bed the teacher whose name I can't recall but who stayed in the boarding house came for me. He got me out of bed and took me to his room where he hit me with his slipper on my bare backside. It was very painful. I can't recall how often he hit me with the slipper.

42. On the occasion I was hit with a cricket bat was in the gym in front of the rest of the class. It was extremely painful and totally humiliating. It left the impression of the cricket bat on my skin for several days after. I can't recall what I had done to deserve it. The man who hit me with the cricket bat was the PE teacher but I can't recall his name.
43. I can also remember a room at the end of the dormitory which was a sort of office. I don't know what the room or what it was used for. You could not access the office from the dormitory. I recall hearing the screams of some boys who were receiving some sort of punishment for running away. When I could hear the screaming from other pupils, it affected me terribly. I could only guess why they were screaming. It was mentally disturbing to me.
44. I don't think that any of the older boys were involved in punishment. The only punishments came from the teaching staff.

Abuse at Queen Victoria School.

45. The dormitory captain was called [REDACTED]. He was an older boy because he was held back a year. After lights out he would tell the other boys in the dormitory to come to his bed and to fondle his private parts. I refused to do this and was threatened by him. It only happened to me on one occasion. Some of the other boys were too scared to refuse. I was ten years old and quite confused about what was happening but I knew it was wrong.
46. It wasn't a direct attack on me it was just something that happened in the dormitory. I think that some of the other boys did fondle his private parts but no one spoke about it. [REDACTED] was a lot bigger than most of the other boys and was a bully. He would use his size to intimidate and get what he wanted. My mind goes blank after remembering what happened after this encounter. I'm sure I walked away from this situation.

47. I was stabbed by my best mate at Queen Victoria School when we had an argument. I can't recall what it was about and I can't even remember his name. It happened in the dormitory at night time and was near the end of my second year. My best mate had been sent a penknife by his father and during the argument he took out the knife and stabbed me in the leg. I don't know what happened after that. There was some blood but I have no recollection of what happened after I was stabbed. I assume that I did receive some medical aid but I have no memories.
48. The next thing I knew I was back home and it was three in the morning and my father was wakening me up. He asked me if I wanted to go back to Queen Victoria School and I told him that I did want to go back. In the morning there was a box containing my kit from school sitting on the kitchen table and that signalled the end of my schooling at Queen Victoria School.
49. In later years I learned through my sister that my father had gone to the school and threatened some of the teachers over what had happened to me when I was stabbed. I think that his actions forced the school to ask me to leave. The whole incident after I was stabbed is not clear in my mind and I don't know the truth of what happened.

Reporting of abuse at Queen Victoria

50. There was no one to report the abuse to. I have never contacted the police to report what happened to me and I don't know if the police were asked to investigate the stabbing incident.

Leaving Queen Victoria School, Dunblane 1967

51. It was just before the summer break when I left the school. I was upset at having to leave the school as I had set my heart on completing the schooling and then joining the army. I never asked my father what had happened and he never told me.

Life after being in boarding school.

52. I went back to stay with my family in Lockerbie and continued my education at the local school. My mother at this time had discovered religion and had become a Jehovah's Witness. The whole family became involved and we would attend the meetings.
53. I think that we moved to Newcastle and I attended a lot of different schools where I had to learn to stand up for myself because I was Jehovah's Witness and was being bullied. I left school at fifteen with no qualifications. I got married and for the next twenty-five years I lived as a Jehovah's Witness.
54. I didn't embark on a career because my first love was to join the army which had been taken from me. I was a Jehovah's Witness and not able to join the army. I trained as a gas and electrical engineer and that is what I do now. I divorced my wife and left the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Impact

55. I think that I am insecure and I find that I attach myself to people that I would not normally expect to. I think that my experiences at Queen Victoria School made me do that. I did not get any life experience at the school apart from the times that members of my father's regiment came to visit. I was really sold on joining the army and was looking forward to it. It was a huge disappointment when I left Queen Victoria School.
56. I am still trying to find out what happened to me and I am active on social media speaking to former pupils of Queen Victoria School. I also help to counsel Jehovah's Witnesses who have been abused. I try to help all people who have been abused when they were members of a cult. I think with having had the experience of the Jehovah's Witnesses I am able to bring my knowledge to help others.

57. I always try to find the good things that come from the bad things and am very positive and keen to move forward. It was my doctor that advised me to leave my wife who was also a Jehovah's Witness and I have never looked back. It was a very poor relationship and I was very unhappy.

Records

58. In 2017 I wrote to the Headmistress Wendy Bellars at Queen Victoria School to see if the school had any records. I am keen to find out what happened to me and why I had to leave the school. She wrote back to say that no records existed at the school covering that period. I had written previously over the years since I had left but this was the first time that I had received a reply. I still have not seen my school records.

Lessons to be learned

59. There should be more individual support offered to children entering boarding school. They should be sat down and told what to expect and what is expected from them. There should be someone in the teaching staff who you can go to talk about anything that is causing you problems. The fact that I seem to have many blanks in my memory at the critical times at Queen Victoria School is still a bit worrying to me. Some answers would help me to put these to rest.
60. I feel that if there was someone to talk to when I got stabbed I would have completed my education and gone right through the school and thus been able to join the army. I am sure had this been talked about and I had been consulted it would have been resolved and there would have been no need for me to leave the school.

Hopes for the Inquiry

- 61. There should be a point of contact for a child to go to and the Inquiry should be stressing this as a basic requirement of people in charge of children. When they are sexually abused or bullied there should be someone available to help and prevent it from continuing. I don't want children to be treated as I was where I was "thrown in and then thrown out". I would not have been subjected to a cult which forced me into a mentally abusive relationship for twenty five years.

- 62. I hope at some time I may get the answers to some of the questions that I have about what happened to me when I was a pupil at the school. I don't know if the Inquiry can help with that but I am pleased that Queen Victoria School is being investigated.

Other information

- 63. I have four photographs from my time at Queen Victoria School. They are mainly of me in sporting gear with some other boys and are in black and white. I could make them available to the Inquiry if they required to see them.

- 64. 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.....CRR.....

Dated.....06 October 2020.....