

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

BTL

1. My name is BTL My date of birth is 1953. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going to Loretto School, Musselburgh

2. My parents were called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They were both born and raised in Newcastle. I was also born in Newcastle and lived there until I went to Loretto. I attended a private prep school called Ascham House which was not primarily a boarding school but did weekly boarding for some pupils and I weekly boarded there, I think, for my last year before I went away to Loretto.
3. I have a sister who is quite a bit older than me and she attended an independent day school.
4. My uncle attended a public school which was a Quaker establishment but apart from him I think I was the first person in the family to go away to school. My parents chose Loretto because on a family holiday when I was very small they encountered a family whose children were at Loretto and my father was very impressed with how polite and well behaved they were. That is why, primarily, they decided to send me there.
5. You had to pass the Common Entrance Exam before you could go to Loretto. I can't remember if I was twelve or thirteen when I went. I had a trip to Edinburgh with my mother to buy my school uniform but I can't remember whether I visited Loretto prior to starting.

6. I started Loretto in [REDACTED] 1966 or [REDACTED] 1967. I entered the school at the beginning of the [REDACTED] term of the entry level year to the senior school because, with a [REDACTED] birthday, I was young for my year. I started, therefore, [REDACTED] after most of my third form contemporaries. I boarded all the time I was there.

Loretto School

7. Loreto was quite a small school. There were only about 240 boys in it at the time I was there and it was all boarding so I don't think there were any day boys. There were four houses. Each house accommodated about sixty boys and had a slightly distinct character. From, a Seton perspective, School House had the reputation of being 'boring'; Hope House was a little more rakish; Pinkie House was slightly more eccentric; Seton House had a reputation for being quite 'on trend', musically.
8. The school was intersected by what was then the main A1 which was the road out of Musselburgh going east. There was a tunnel which had been built shortly before I arrived so that staff and pupils didn't have to cross the main road which was obviously extremely busy. School House and the main academic blocks were on the north of the A1 between that and the River Eske. Seton, Hope and Pinkie House and some of the playing fields were on the southern side. Seton was the house closest to the A1.
9. There was a junior school, 'the Nippers', which was close to (it was on the opposite side of the River Esk) but administratively separate from the senior school. It had its own staff and headmaster and, as I recall it, there was little or no cross-over on a daily basis. The Nippers acted as a 'feeder school' to Loretto with boys moving to the senior school following the common-entrance exam, taken at about the age of thirteen.

Staff at Loretto

10. The headmaster at the time was Rab Bruce-Lockhart. He had been at the school for quite a long time by then. He was an exceptional educationalist of his day. I think he

had been an international rugby and squash player or certainly a very good rugby player and sportsman. By the time I got there he was getting on a bit and in some ways a little past his best but he was an extremely honourable and nice man. I didn't have a massive amount to do with him until I was further up the school but I would say he was completely irreproachable and it is slightly to my regret that I wasn't at the school when he was absolutely in his prime. I don't have any criticism to make of him. It was a privilege to be under the authority of a man of his integrity.

11. Below the headmaster, there would have been a deputy headmaster, then housemasters, deputy housemasters, heads of academic departments and a similar hierarchy on the sporting side - particular masters being in charge of particular sports. There were also a school and four house matrons who looked after the domestic and housekeeping side of the school and houses.
12. For classes, the teachers stayed put and the pupils moved from classroom to classroom. The academic block was quite compact so we didn't have to go far. Inevitably there were a few duff teachers but there were also some extremely good teachers. Across the piste, I would say the standard was pretty good.
13. As you went up the school and your curriculum narrowed you did the subjects which most interested you and those tended to be the ones which were best taught in your particular case, depending on your proclivity for Arts or Sciences. I ended up doing History, English and Spanish (which I changed for Ancient History, after a year). I would say my senior school education was particularly good.
14. My housemaster ^{CFE} [REDACTED] otherwise known as [REDACTED] taught [REDACTED]. He was bright and a good teacher who loved his subject. On an academic level he and I were never on the same wavelength because I think he thought I was a rather indifferent student. He was particularly good with the really bright students. The [REDACTED] [REDACTED] teacher I remember was Paddy Orr – he also had a good teaching reputation and had worked in the state sector.

15. The chaplain was called Gus Wright. He was a delightful chap but he wasn't a great teacher.
16. Later on up the school, my history teacher was Peter Lapping. He went on to become headmaster at Sherborne. He was inspirational as a history teacher and I had great respect for him.
17. Alan Thompson was Head of Languages - he was eccentric but delightful. He had an extremely nice wife.
18. Byron Jones was Head of Chemistry. He was also a nice chap and I think he was quite a good teacher, although I never shone at Science.
19. Gavin McDowell was to become, with good reason, a 'school treasure' and spent most of his career at Loretto. He taught physics, was single and did a great deal, extra-curricularly. Sailing was his particular interest. He was okay as a teacher but I didn't shine on the Physics side.
20. The [REDACTED] teacher was [REDACTED]^{PGR}. He later became housemaster of Seton House. He was a Lorettonian as a boy and spent the vast majority of his career, there. He is still alive and runs the [REDACTED]. He is a very nice chap. He was probably perfectly okay as a teacher but [REDACTED] wasn't my subject. As a housemaster, he had a different style to [REDACTED]^{CFE}. He didn't have [REDACTED]^{CFE}'s insouciance but he was an honourable and decent man.
21. The Head of Art was called Arty 'B' (Baxter).

Hierarchy of pupils

22. On the pupil side there was a head boy, a deputy head boy, school prefects, including heads of houses, and house prefects. The heads of house and house prefects had an element of supervisory responsibility within the boarding houses. The responsibilities of the school prefects and head of school were wider.

Routine at Loretto

First day

23. My father had just had a heart attack before I was due to start so a friend of the family took my mother and I up there on the first day. I was a bit apprehensive when I arrived. I was a young boy and this was the first time I had been properly away from home.
24. The school had recently undergone a major house-building and refurbishment programme. I was in Seton House which was newly built. It was extremely attractive and the welcome was good so I was pretty impressed.
25. My housemaster and the deputy housemaster welcomed us. I remember there was a reception/tea party for the families whose boys were starting in that house. That was held in the housemaster's private accommodation which was very attractive. CFE [REDACTED] the Seton Housemaster and his deputy, Cliff Sparks, a chemistry teacher, welcomed us. Cliff was a young, single man at that time. I think he later left Loretto but returned a couple of years later as housemaster of Hope House. He was replaced as housemaster of Seton by Norrie Porter and later Gus O'Connell, both pleasant, young, married men with young children.
26. I can't remember how I was introduced to the school more broadly but I don't have any adverse memories of it.

Sleeping arrangements

27. In Seton, there was one dormitory which was very small and only slept about five people and the biggest dormitory slept no more than twelve. You rotated each term so that you were never in the same dormitory or with exactly the same boys for more than a term at a time. The third form entry level dormitories were probably the

biggest. The dormitories weren't partitioned. They were open plan rooms with three or four feet between the beds. I think I had a bedside table in the dormitory.

28. There was a 'head of dorm', a lower sixth form boy, and a deputy head of dorm, probably a fifth former. Supervision was carried out by these boys. The housemaster and the deputy housemaster did the rounds every night as well.
29. The system which applied to all of the houses was that one was in a dormitory until either your last year or second last year when the sixth form had their own studies or bedsits. I think in your lower sixth year you had a study but it wasn't a bedsit.

Daily routine

30. I think we were woken up by a bell and we made our own beds. We all went to the tub room and had a shower which was communal. You did your ablutions and I think there was then a house assembly very quickly where all the heads of room had to report that everyone was present. Then we all walked across to breakfast which was in the main dining hall in School House on the other side of the A1. We went through the tunnel, down the Ash Walk and into the dining hall. After that we went back to house very briefly and collected our things for school. Lessons began around 8:30 am.
31. There was a mid-morning break and lunch was after the second academic session. Sometimes we had one lesson after lunch but we had games every day. After games there was another lesson before tea. After tea, you did an hour or two hours of prep which was done in your house and supervised by a senior boy or possibly the deputy housemaster. Then there was a relatively short period of free time before bed which I think was quite early - I want to say 9 pm but it might have been a bit later than that. We had a pretty full day.

Mealtimes/Food

32. Just before bed we got a final refreshment like a cup of chocolate or soup and a piece of oatcake or a biscuit so we didn't go to bed particularly hungry. The food was adequate but its quality varied. It got much better much later when my children attended Loretto. In my day it was basic but nobody starved.
33. We used to get food parcels from home. My mother was a good cook and she would send me food including things like fruit cake. We all had a locker in the main corridor in School House where the dining facilities were and I think that's where I kept any food my mother sent me.
34. On a Wednesday and Saturday, I think, we were allowed into Musselburgh to go to the shops. There was quite a good baker's. I'm not sure we were allowed into cafes but we could certainly buy stuff in the shops. There was also a school tuck shop, so you could, to an extent, supplement the main meals.
35. Most of the staff ate in the dining room with us, certainly at lunch time. There was a head table at which the staff and school prefects sat. The dining room was laid-out with refectory tables at which the boys, apart from school prefects, sat. I think we were all allocated seats and the more junior boys did the serving at the table. There was a head of table and I think you sat down the benches according to seniority, with the junior boys at one end and the senior boys at the other.

Washing / bathing

36. Except for once a week, junior boys only showered. The houses were newly built so the washing facilities were pretty good. Older boys were privileged in as much as they could bathe. The tubs were individual, very deep and quite short. The tubs were in the same space as the showers in what was, in effect, a wet room. The younger boys we had a bath once a week. There were approximately six to eight tubs and eight showers.

Clothing / uniform

37. I think you were required to change your shirt and underwear at least every two or three days. I believe this was quite strict and we were obliged to adopt pretty high standards of cleanliness. There was either a school laundry or the laundry was done by contractors. All your clothing was required to be named.

Discipline

38. We were adolescent boys so there were inevitably some discipline issues. Some boys were more adventurous than others, would get into 'hot water' and were duly punished. It wasn't an unruly regime or environment and in many ways I think it was remarkably well disciplined. There was never wide scale insurrection. The school was a close community but not claustrophobic. I'm sure it was more manageable because it was a smaller size.
39. I think there were school and house punishment books in which punishments were recorded. The principle form of punishment was 'maps' - you had to draw one or more maps of somewhere, depending on the level of the offence you had committed. I don't think we did 'lines' but I can't remember.
40. You could be hauled in front of your housemaster or, in a serious case, the headmaster, for verbal admonition.
41. There would have been 'gatings' – if you did something relatively serious, you could be denied privileges such as going out at a weekend with your parents or going into Musselburgh on a Saturday.
42. The ultimate punishment was corporal and it was all strictly controlled. In limited circumstances the school prefects were able to administer corporal punishment. I think there was a points system so if you had more than a certain number of maps within a period of time, and these were house offences, then the head of house

administered the corporal punishment. I think the individual class masters, if you were highly disruptive in class, could also administer corporal punishment. Above that, the housemasters could do so and so could the headmaster. It went up the chain according to the severity of the offence. Corporal punishment was administered using a cane and never using a tawse (a term with which I was unfamiliar until it was put to me in the course of preparing this statement). I know, by the standards of today, the very idea of corporal punishment is abhorrent but, at Loretto in the 1960's, it was neither endemic nor uncontrolled.

43. The founder of the school was a man called Hely Hutchison-Hammond, a great educationalist of his day and a proponent of 'healthy living'. One tradition dating from his time was that, until you were in upper sixth, you wore thick serge shorts. Any corporal punishment was administered over clothing. The older the shorts were, the more they had been repaired and the bigger was the badge of honour. The seat of them became reinforced over time so you were, as a result, quite well padded.
44. I was caned but not with any great regularity and I can't remember the details so I don't think it had a lasting impact. The maximum number of blows was six and I think there was some degree of gradation.
45. The ultimate sanction was expulsion. There were boys expelled for smoking and generally bad behaviour. You weren't expelled for a first offence of smoking but if you were caught repeatedly and regarded as a disruptive influence then I think expulsion usually followed. I remember one incidence of that occurring to a boy in my house. He was a nice bloke and a good rugby player, as I recall. I don't want to mention his name because I am not sufficiently clear on the detail but I think he was expelled for being repeatedly caught smoking.

Sport

46. The main team sports were rugby, cricket and hockey. We played rugby in the winter term, hockey in the spring term and cricket in the summer term, assuming you were any good at cricket. Athletics was also a main summer sport – I ran middle distance

for the school. Those who weren't competent on the cricket pitch, including me, played 'Leagues' - a selection of other sports including hockey, football and athletics in a league system. We played against other schools and some local teams.

Activities/Free time

47. There was time for other activities, certainly on Sundays, which was the only day that you really had any time which was unsupervised and it wasn't for very long. There were other non-core things you could do like music lessons and there were all sorts of societies. The slot after prep was maybe when these things took place.
48. There was a sailing club. I did a lot of sailing, in the summer term which involved cycling down to the harbour in Musselburgh.
49. If games were off, due to poor weather, or you were excused due to illness, you could do something like cycling. This was popular because it got you outside the school boundaries. There were also quite long school runs.
50. We didn't have a lot of free time that wasn't controlled. As you got older, and certainly in the sixth form, you were very occasionally allowed to go into Edinburgh to watch a film which I remember doing.
51. There were also illicit departures from the school which some people did more than others. That was a relatively serious offence if you were caught. One of my contemporaries used to pass himself off as an old man so that he could smoke on the bus into Edinburgh and was annoyed when the conductor gave him the choice - 'full fare or put out the fag!'. I think he was ultimately expelled for stealing the brass balls off the art master's printing press and selling them to the local 'scrappy'.
52. We also had a swimming pool where we had swimming lessons at some point through the week. The man who, at first, ran that was an old army chap called Jack Flatters who also ran the gym - we had 'gym' once a week. He was quickly replaced by Malcolm Jack, a much younger and more proficient physical fitness teacher.

53. Loretto was always a very 'arty' school. In terms of theatrical productions, there was a theatre where there were regular amateur productions and, latterly, joint productions with a girls' school, Oxenford, just outside Musselburgh. There were no outsiders involved in the production but I think we usually did one performance open to people from the town. There would have been a school play each year and, usually, a Gilbert and Sullivan musical. It was quite an active theatre and a number of the masters were interested. Byron Jones, the Chemistry master, used to do all the technical side of things and, through him, I became the school stage electrician.
54. There was also an active 'social services' function – older boys were allocated an old age pensioner in Musselburgh (mine was a lady called 'Granny Williams') whom one visited, usually with another pupil, once a week.

Trips

55. There was an annual sailing trip which Gavin McDowell used to organise but, sadly, I missed out on that. I think there was an annual, foreign skiing trip which, again, I missed. There was an annual mass-walk called the 'Grinds', over the Lammermuir Hills and a Combined Cadet Force ('CCF') which involved two or three day expeditions, if you did the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, as I did. There was also an annual camp where the school went to an army base, slept under canvas, 'drilled' and worked, physically on some project or another – I think each boy only had to 'do camp', once.
56. Ricky Demarco, the Scottish artist, was a big influence on Loretto in my day and there were trips to his galleries.
57. We used to go skiing at Glenshee when we often stayed with an old Lorettonian and his wife who had a lovely house nearby.

Birthdays and Christmas

58. We had a very beautiful chapel and we had a 'whole-school' choir. Singing practice on a Saturday night, after a win over Fettes or Merchiston, was a highlight. The carol service at Christmas was also quite an event.
59. I don't remember celebrating my birthday.

Visits / Inspections

60. There must have been school inspections carried out but I don't remember them.

Healthcare

61. The House Matron was the first port of call if anybody was poorly. If you had a headache, she would give you an aspirin and if you took a knock playing sports she would make the initial call as to whether or not you needed any further attention. There was also the school sanatorium to which you were referred for anything other than a very minor illness or injury. The sanatorium was on the other side of the A1, some distance from School house and behind the swimming baths.
62. There was a delightful, school nurse in the sanatorium and she was pretty good. If she couldn't handle it, doctors were on call to deal with anything more serious. We didn't have our own school doctor so I think one of the local Musselburgh doctors would attend.

Running away

63. I don't remember anybody running away while I was at the school.

Fagging/Abuse

64. There was no fagging at Loretto in those days. As for 'abuse', other than some low-grade, boy-to-boy bullying, I didn't witness any. Certainly, I was aware of no sexual abuse whether between boys or involving staff during my time at the school.
65. The name, Guy Rayhills, was raised with me by those who took this statement. As I recall, he was a master in the Nippers, the junior school to Loretto, but had been drummed-out a couple of years before I went to Loretto in the senior school. I believe he was accused of 'interfering' with some of the younger boys. I have no direct knowledge of this because I did not go to the Nippers and, anyway, his activities were before my time but his dismissal was something talked about amongst the boys in the senior school because some had been at the Nippers at the relevant time.
66. Because of the association between the junior and senior parts of the school, I think both parts reacted strongly to the Rayhills affair and did all they could to avoid repetition. I don't think the school tried to deny what had happened or to cover it up although I'm sure that any resultant publicity was kept to a minimum. Of course, there wasn't the same focus on matters of abuse in those days. The steps that the school took in the wake of Rayhills probably enhanced the 'Loretto experience' for my generation.

Contact with home

67. There was a public phone box in the house and I think there was a regime of control in terms of its use.
68. I used to write home and my parents would write to me. I'm certain the letters we wrote to our parents weren't censored. There were no restraints on where you posted your letters and there were never any rumours among the boys about 'censorship'.

69. We were allowed out a relatively small number of times a term and in the longer terms there was a half term. Most people's parents came to see them maybe twice a term to take them out for the day. That didn't work for some children because their parents worked abroad and when I first went to the school there were still a lot of boys whose parents were in East Africa. There were a few boys from Australia so their parents couldn't, practically speaking, visit them but aunts and uncles or other relatives or friends resident in the United Kingdom might have taken them out.

Life after school

70. After I left Loretto, I was uncertain about whether I wanted to go to university so I worked for my father for a year and then I decided to go to the University of Hull where I read Law. I became a partner in a provincial firm but, deciding on a change and instead of going down south, as originally planned, I joined one of the firm's clients as their in-house legal director. That role developed along more commercial lines and, broadly speaking, that's what I did for the rest of my career, apart from one brief period when I went back into private practice as a partner with a firm in Newcastle.
71. After I left university, I attended some Old Boys dinners and for a while I was [REDACTED] of the Old Lorettonian Society. I don't do anything like that now but I have stayed in touch with quite a few folks. I had a lifelong friendship with two or three contemporaries from Loretto but there were others with whom I was very friendly at school but whom I never saw again after we left. There are also a number of non-contemporaries with whom I later became and remain good friends.

Impact

72. I think the fact that I was willing to send my own children to Loretto highlights the positive experience I had there. Both my daughter (born 1982) and son (born 1984) prospered, both academically and otherwise, at the school and have gone on to have successful post-school careers.

73. The school was by no means perfect but I doubt any school is. I think the small size of Loretto was a benefit although, in some ways, it was also a disadvantage - we didn't have the 'gene pool' to compete, on level terms, in some of the major sports with larger schools like Fettes and Merchiston. This taught you that it wasn't all about winning. There were some fantastic sportsmen at Loretto and we had some great teams, so we often punched significantly above our weight but, for an indifferent sportsman like me, 'taking the knocks' was a good lesson in life.
74. I think the fact that I was lucky enough to go to Loretto after a period of significant investment in the new housing was a 'positive' as was the absence of fagging.
75. I think boarding at Loretto knocked-off a lot of my rough edges. If you have attended a boarding school, you can rub along with most people. It's difficult to know how much of what you've become is as a result of your education but my time at Loretto probably gave me a degree of confidence. It taught me an appreciation of excellence but also the lesson that you may not always succeed at something as well as you might have wished. I also learnt the importance of personal responsibility.
76. Team sports were a very good thing. The general requirement to take part in a variety of sports is hugely important, particularly for people who are not particularly athletic. I think that the average child usually needs to be pushed a bit. They may hate it at the time but it doesn't do them any harm.
77. At Loretto, there was a huge amount of humour, some of it quite sardonic. Lorettonians tended to be quite a cynical bunch but we had a lot of laughs. It encouraged me to see the funny side of life. It also left me with some very good friends, a number of whom are sadly now dead.

Lessons to be Learned


78. Where there has been material abuse, whether of a sexual or other variety, it is inexcusable and it needs to be rooted out – although I am sceptical of raking over

coals where the process relies on memories dimmed by the passage of time and judges social norms which, anyway, have changed, by the standards of today. 'Abuse' plainly has existed and may still do so at some establishments. But speaking from my own experience, I do not believe that its occurrence, particularly in the long-ago past, warrants a denigration of the benefits bestowed by the sort of education that I was fortunate to enjoy. There is a sector of the educational and political establishments which dislikes private education, especially public schools. To discredit the 'private education' and the public school system on the basis of incidences of serious abuse at a minority of establishments would, I believe, be unwarranted.

- 79. That is why I have chosen to take part in the Inquiry. I have mentioned this to one or two friends who were old Lorettonians and to others, including one person who attended another similar school. I emailed Loretto to let the school know that I was initially going to take part but had changed my mind because of logistical difficulties. I did not receive any response. I subsequently decided to take part when I was informed that the interview could be conducted remotely.

- 80. It is vitally important that abuse of whatever nature isn't tolerated. Had my wife or I had any suspicions or concerns that it prevailed at Loretto when our children were there, we would not have hesitated to withdraw them from the school. I believe my own parents, had they ever had those concerns, would have taken exactly the same view in regard to me. I had a very close relationship with my parents and I would not have hesitated to tell them had there been anything which concerned me as an individual at Loretto at that time.

- 81. 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..... 03 October 2020