

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

BPO  
[REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is <sup>BPO</sup> [REDACTED]. That is my married surname and at school I was known as [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1970. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going to boarding school

2. My parents' names are [REDACTED]. I have one brother who was born in 1967 and he is called [REDACTED]. I was born in Paisley and that was where I initially went to primary school before my father took a job in Libya as a public health engineer. The whole family went to live in Benghazi. I then started to attend a British school in Libya. It wasn't fantastic. I think my schooling there was rubbish.
3. In 1978 my brother left to return to Scotland and to attend Morrison's Academy. I followed him in [REDACTED] 1979. I was aged nine when I started at the same school. It was very difficult to get out of Libya and it wasn't safe for me to continue my education there as a white, red-haired girl and they were some of the reasons for them sending me in 1979. Things were also getting difficult in the political situation with Gaddafi.

### **Morrison's Academy, Crieff, Perthshire**

4. My parents chose Morrison's as it was one of just a few co-ed boarding schools in Scotland and it meant both me and my brother could go to the same place. I actually had very little idea that I was going to boarding school. I hadn't visited the school, although my brother was there I never went. My parents had viewed it before we went out to Libya, in about 1975 I think, when they had gone to the school to put our names down. They'd always planned for it to happen.
  
5. If there was an exam I had to take to get in I have no idea about that. I think at the time the school was so desperate for children to come in and parents to pay the fees that they didn't hold an exam. I don't remember any preparation for me going to school. I remember putting my trunk together and my mum telling me to take a book. I was such a happy go lucky little girl at that age and if they had prepared me I wouldn't have taken it in. I wasn't academic at all and I just wanted to play with my dolls and chat with my granny who we were staying with that summer.
  
6. I went into a boarding house called Knockearn. My brother had been in there for a year before I arrived as for some reason the school had done mixed boarding for one year. By the time I arrived he had moved into a boy's house called Academy, which was just across the grass from my boarding house but it may as well have been miles away. I never really saw him.
  
7. In fact [REDACTED] had already been there for a year when I arrived and he'd got into a different mind-set and he wasn't interested in his little sister. Unless he needed some money from me. He was in S1 and he was growing up and he was learning to survive in a big boys' boarding house and feeling his way through the school. I was the last thing he needed to identify with. I would see him on a daily basis, on the way to the refectory, but he would never acknowledge me.
  
8. There were twenty-four girls in my boarding house and there were about five dorm rooms. There was one big dorm room with about ten girls in it and I eventually ended up there in P7 and I hated it. Knockearn was a traditional Scottish stone house and

was quite large and must have been home to a large family in its day. It was not very well kept and a bit down at the heel. It was one of the older boarding houses.

9. I was initially put into a dorm of just four and it had been newly painted and had nice curtains. There was a matron, Mrs Harris, and a housemistress and also a prep tutor, Mrs BPP. She came twice a week to supervise prep and give the house mistress a break and sometimes stayed over one weekend a term. They were the only adult influences in the boarding house. I didn't trust Mrs BPP at all, but she wasn't unapproachable. She just didn't get involved and just sat there and chewed gum when she wasn't out smoking. We didn't trust her not to tell tales about us to the house mistress and then we'd get into trouble. We didn't confide in her.
10. The house mistress, Mrs BPP, was smiley in front of the parents and she wasn't without humour, at the start, but that changed. I wonder if that was her first job as a house mistress. She and her family lived in their own facilities at the far end of the building with their own self-contained accommodation. Her husband lived with her and they had two sons. One was under school age and the other one was at school. She was fine at first, but it soon became apparent she had extreme mood swings. One minute she would be quite pleasant and the next she would shout the house down and we'd all get into trouble.
11. The school motto was 'Strive for the Heights'. It wasn't very academic when I was there and I think it was just a way of shuffling children along and keeping them safe when our parents were abroad. There was never any culture of having somebody you could talk to and that was a reflection of the late 1970s and early 1980s. There wasn't any trusted person you could go to or anyone identified as someone we could go and talk to about personal matters. Not like now when I think of my son's experience in school of having pastoral teachers.
12. The headmaster of the school was called Mr Ashmall, He had just started as the headmaster when I started at Morrison's and he was still there when I left in 1985. He was away a lot in my last few years at the school as he was frequently in Asia, trying

to get business for the school. At the time, my father was furious about paying fees and the headmaster was never in the school.

13. We had sports houses in the school. My brother was in Campbells and I was in Murrays. The school hadn't realised we were siblings, whereas other brothers and sisters were in the same house. That was another loss of personal identity for me. These were school houses, and separate from the boarding houses.

### **Routine at Morrison's Academy**

#### *First day*

14. Both of my parents took me to school for my first day. I think there might have been a staff member at the front door to greet us as we arrived. There was a house mistress and the matron for the boarding house and I don't remember if there were older girls to welcome us. They were probably doing their own thing. It was all smiles because the parents were there.
15. We were there in the dorm on my first day putting my bed together and there were some other girls in the room and their parents putting their beds together too. Two of them were sisters and I think they were from Pakistan and the other girls' parents lived in the Gambia. We were all young girls and we had all lived in far flung places. I was aged nine, there was a girl of seven, and I think the other two were ten and a year above me. We were all new starts and different personalities.
16. I had a trunk full of clothes and my parents put my clothes away in the dorm, said their good byes and then just left. I just remember standing there and thinking what's going on here? That was quite brutal. I think I spent the rest of the day in tears and it was a bit of a blur. I spent the next month in tears, on and off. I was ok in the school as I could control it, but once I was back in the boarding house it was ghastly.

17. When I started school my mum then stayed in Paisley until the December of that year just to see that I settled into school. Then she went back out to Libya. My granny and my aunt lived in Paisley and a grandad in West Kilbride so I did have a family network in Scotland.
18. I arrived by myself one day and the next day I was in a class of people and into a daily routine that was a quite a shock to me. I had never even seen the primary school until I walked down to it from the boarding house on my first day. I had no idea where I was going.

*Mornings and bedtime*

19. We were up in the morning at 6:30 or 7:00 am and, I think, a bell went or someone came round with a bell. We got washed and dressed before walking as a group to the refectory for breakfast. The house mistress would be getting up herself and I think she was trying to create a family atmosphere. We were left to our own devices to shuffle around the showers and baths. It was freezing in the winter as there was just one night store heater upstairs for four big rooms. On a Sunday we got a short lie-in in the mornings.
20. At night we had a bath and then we went to bed and were told it was lights out and if we made any sound there would be trouble. Those were the last words we heard at night. Lights out was about 8:30 pm and at 9:00 pm on a Saturday. Overnight there was no one on waking duty. The house mistress' home was in part of the building and there were connecting doors to her home on both upstairs and downstairs. She could come in or go out at any time.
21. My second house mistress was Mrs Richardson and she was married to one of the maths teachers. Her husband never came into the boarding house. Mrs Richardson was not a teacher. She didn't have any assistant housemistress, just the matron.

*Mealtimes / Food*

22. After washing, we'd get dressed and put our shoes on and then line up in our pairs. I think we were buddied with older people. We ate in a refectory that was an old theatre and the house residents traipsed down there at different times to eat.
23. At breakfast we had cereal and toast with tea and water to drink. On a Sunday we got a cooked breakfast and that was even more hideous. The ladies in the canteen were great and really friendly and I think they could see we were miserable.
24. For evening meals the food was pretty rubbish as it was institutionalised cooking in massive vats. I loved the puddings though. I often didn't eat much as I didn't like the food. The Spaghetti Bolognese was especially rancid. There was a roast on a Sunday and that was the big meal of the week. If you were involved in a school activity you could order a packed lunch.
25. At the evening meal, each boarding house would have a metal box to take away and that would contain cakes for supper.

*Washing / bathing*

26. In the boarding house, there was two bathrooms with baths in them and one shower. There were five sinks. There were quite a few toilets downstairs too. A lot of the time some of us had had a shower or bath the night before and we weren't going to the showers in the morning. It was mainly the seniors going for showers in the morning.
27. Having a bath in the evening was on a rota every two days. I shared with somebody, and sometimes we were in the bath at the same time and sometimes one after the other. At one point we all got boils on our legs because we were sharing bath water. There was probably two or three girls using the same water. Then we had the baths removed and more showers installed and that was a revelation. That was around P7 time.

28. Bath time was supervised on and off. The staff weren't hovering around to watch you in the same room. That was matron who might be putting clothes away when we were bathing. People would play around in the bathroom and whip each other with wet towels, but it was not done with malice. It was just playing in fun. I didn't get any help with washing and brushing my long hair.

*Clothing / uniform*

29. There was a boot room in Knockearn where we kept our shoes in individual lockers and we had to come in to that room to polish our shoes.
30. For our uniform we wore a grey skirt, grey shirt normally and a white shirt at weekends, grey V-necked jumper and tie and grey socks and they had to come from a particular shop. There was also a blazer and at weekends we had a kilt. We had our own clothes for play, but just one pair of trousers and a top and if anything happened to them you were stuffed. I grew out of my clothes quickly and you'd get picked on for looking silly.

*School*

31. After breakfast we'd walk back up the hill and over to the prep room which was opposite and we shared that with other boarding houses. We were separated off with partitions. After that prep session you'd go and pick your bag up and walk down to school.
32. I started the school in Primary 5. The education I received was very good. On my very first day the name of my teacher compounded everything and she was Mrs Marcantonio and that was such a difficult name to get my head round in Primary 5. She was really tall and Greek. I thought to myself this was another hell coming. In fact the teacher was really lovely. Also, as my surname was [REDACTED] I invariably ended up right at the front of the class as the surnames beginning with [REDACTED] would be at the back.
33. It became apparent quite quickly that my maths was appalling and at the first tests just before Christmas I was close to the bottom of the class. I was quite angry at myself

and decided I had to improve and I really worked at it and by the end of that school year my results put me in the middle of the class. I studied like fury and after school we had an hour and a half of free time in the boarding house before walking to tea. I used the time to read my maths book or my history book when everyone else watched TV.

34. I did that consistently and also I found it kept me out of trouble. I quickly learned that if I kept quiet or didn't even comment on anything it was a way of staying out of trouble. There was also a very structured prep period at night from about 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. When you're in P5 and have to sit for two hours there's not a lot to do, you can either read a book, which I did, or do nothing and I did more maths and I kept working.
35. By the end of the summer term of my first year I'd got quite friendly with a young lad and we were playing in the classroom and I whacked him with a ruler. We were just playing and laughing at each other. The teacher told us to sit down. She asked me to stay behind at the end of the class and I thought 'I'm in for it' and she told me that was the first time she'd seen me laughing in the whole year.
36. School has its own dynamics, but they are natural dynamics of things being fair and not fair. We got told off as a class because we were chattering, that was fair. I never found the school dynamic difficult.
37. After my first two years I had to go back to school in P7. It had been a difficult summer in Paisley as I discovered by parents were having a bad time and things were deteriorating. My dad had moved to Saudi Arabia. My mum refused to go. I'd had long hair and I got it cut that summer. I'd also told myself I wasn't going to cry anymore and I had to handle things and it was too exhausting to be so upset.
38. I used to have a doll at school that my parents had given me in my first year at school for something to cuddle. I decided that was making my situation worse and I needed to grow up before I went into P7. My mum bought a doll from the Snoopy cartoons, and he was all the rage at the time, and that was called Spike who was Snoopy's cooler cousin. That was all part of my change for going back to school and I was two



years into the school so felt I was an older girl. That was also when I really clammed up and I went back in and I never spoke. I was even quieter than I used to be and I just kept my head down and didn't speak to people. It was noted in my reports that I didn't mix well. I finished up going into a good set at the end of that year.

39. In my P7 year we had a new house mistress, Mrs Richardson, and she was quite good at the start, she'd come from another boarding school experience. She was really regulated and regimented. Her husband was really lovely and he was a maths teacher at the school. She was very good for that year and she set out the rules and we knew where we were for a period of time. People got into trouble a lot, but it was fair.
40. However, again, you couldn't re-dress anything if it felt unfair, and there was a lot that was unfair. In the boarding house, the TV would be taken off you and you still got gated, for no apparent reason. If one person did something wrong the whole lot was convicted for the crime.
41. By the time I left I was doing really well educationally as I kept chugging along and we had some phenomenal brains in my year. I learned from them. When I left the school and moved to England I sat my maths exam early as I was so far ahead. I cannot fault the academic regime at Morrison's and that has stood by me to this day. They were fair to me in the school itself, but I never stepped out of line.
42. Most of the teachers referred to the pupils by their surname and not their first name. I think that was common practice in Scotland. It depended on the teacher. In the boarding house we were called by our first names.

### *Religion*

43. When Mrs Richardson became the house mistress in my P7 she changed the church we went to. Previously we'd gone to one called the South Church and then we moved onto one, I think, was called St Andrews. South Church was a bit happy-clappy and I quite liked it.

### *Chores*

44. We did some chores on a Sunday morning. One chore was daily and that was a bucket in the boarding house that had some kind of antiseptic in it and the girls had to put their pants in there. There were twenty-four girls in the house and half of them had periods and they put their pants in this one bucket. That was one chore you never wanted, having to take that from the boarding house to up to the washroom. It was revolting.
45. Also you might have to tidy the senior girls stuff and if anything went missing you were blamed for it. As a junior you would have to polish your own shoes and the shoes of the senior girls. We had an inspection every night of our shoes. It was similar to fagging and it wasn't as brutal in the boys' houses. I think there was a junior girl assigned to a senior girl.
46. When I got to be a senior I was choosing my partner from the junior girls. I'm very anti any nasty behaviour to people and when I chose a junior girl as my partner she was upset when I left the school as I'd been so nice to her. The junior girl seemed to have mental health problems and would lock herself in the toilets. Nobody was trained, amongst the staff, to deal with that. I don't think the staff were aware of her behaviour and they just saw her as trouble and gave her penalties frequently. She wouldn't be allowed into the town or didn't get her pocket money.
47. I had one trump card in this whole life at school and that was because everybody fancied my brother [REDACTED]. When they found out who my brother was, I stopped getting pestered by the seniors because they all loved him. I got lucky in some respects, but anyone who was by themselves at the school would get picked on. This could include being locked in cupboards, moving your stuff around for the hell of it, then you might be late for something in school and get into trouble, clyping or telling tales on you when you'd not done anything.
48. I have to admit I may have locked someone in a cupboard myself and been part of that behaviour. I'm not proud of myself, but there were times for your own survival you

had to do these things. I've blanked out any times when I was locked in a cupboard myself. I remember the cupboard that was halfway up the stairs and when I sat in there I knew it would end at some point and I knew they were all laughing at the other side of the door. I think I would have been locked in the cupboard for ten or fifteen minutes only.

49. I very quickly got into survival mode and observed what was going on and realised at some point I would get it too. It was just a matter of time. When it did happen to me I was in P6 rather than P5 and I was a wee bit tougher. This behaviour was more prevalent at weekends as we were all bored and had free time.

*Leisure time*

50. There was a common room with chairs in that used to belong to the RAF and they were weird colours. They were utilitarian. The TV was in that room. I think there were some more lockers in there for you to keep books in. Also there was a tuck cupboard where you kept a box of sweets and you were allowed to get one piece a day.
51. After school you'd go back to the boarding house and get something out of the tuck shop. You could watch TV up to 4:30 pm before walking down to tea. Afterwards we came back to do prep, then supper and a drink. Whoever was on duty would have to clear up the supper thing. There was maybe a bit more TV and then we got ready for bed.
52. The house mistresses wouldn't be in the common room when we watched TV as they thought they'd give us a bit of space. But in that space girls could be tipped up out of their chairs so they'd fall and it would be considered hilarious. The seniors would kick people and pull their hair and that was another reason for me getting mine cut short.
53. At weekend, Friday night was the TV night. On Thursday night we were allowed to watch Top of the Pops. If someone had done something wrong that was taken away and that hurt some people. On a Saturday morning we could go into the town until lunch time. In the afternoon, some of the houses went to the school swimming pool.

The rest of the afternoon was yours. After tea we came back to the boarding house to do letter writing, before TV and then bed. I don't think our letters home were censored. Someone had the chore of posting them.

54. When I was a senior, and I knew I was leaving the school, in S4, I had to invigilate the letter writing in the common room. One little girl of eight had quickly finished her letter and I said that's ok and she could play with her dolls. I got into a lot of trouble for that and shouted at by Mrs Richardson and told who did I think I was to make the decision. The little girl got into trouble too. I felt angry about it for a long time. Mrs Richardson told me I couldn't reduce my standards just because I was leaving.
55. There was organised sports in the primary school through PE lessons. In senior school you could play hockey and tennis in the summer. After-school activities weren't encouraged for the boarders. By senior school, sport was a big part of the curriculum with rugby, hockey and swimming and we were encouraged to be involved.
56. I had a lovely PE teacher, Mr Archibald, and I did swimming as one of my rotation activities. I had my period and I went up to him and said I was sorry but I couldn't go swimming today and he said it wasn't a problem and I could help with equipment. He didn't make a big scene of me not being to do the activity and I think he just instantly realised what the issue was for me. He was like this with every other senior girl.
57. I found sport to be a release and playing hockey was an excuse to not go back to the boarding house after school. By secondary school you didn't have to go back to the boarding house immediately after school as long as you were in the refectory for tea time. I had to sign myself out of the boarding house and that's understandable.
58. On a Sunday after lunch we were made to go out for walks. There was a bit of private time after that and before we had tea.

*Personal possessions*

59. I had a metal framed bed with a horse hair mattress. There was built in cupboard space with a mirror and we all had a quarter of this cupboard as there were four of us in my first room. We also had a bedside table each. I don't remember even having a chair and we put our clothes over the end of the bed when we were changing at night. We had to keep our own personal things in our lockers. Later on in my time at school we got padlocks but there weren't locks at the beginning.
60. I had taken my own torch to school with me at the start. That was stolen out of my locker. Money was stolen and by that I mean just pennies, but that was all we had then. If you'd left any toiletries they got stolen too. I very quickly learned not to have anything personal and what I did have I carried in my school bag so nobody knew. We all knew who was stealing it.

*Birthdays and Christmas*

61. I always had my birthday in my summer holidays. If someone had their birthday in school we said happy birthday. There was no cake, unless a parent organised it. They might get presents from their parents and perhaps on a weekend when they went home. Most children were at home over Christmas and we got slightly longer holidays than state schools. They weren't encouraged to stay in the school over the holidays.

*Visits / Inspections*

62. I arrived at the school in 1979 and we were allowed one phone call each week and we had to write letters home. I think we got two weekends out in the first term, it might have been just one because there was half-term and I'm a bit vague on this. When I arrived I had no idea when I'd be going to see my family again, although I knew when half-term was. I said to myself at the start 'just six weeks, I've got to do this' and get through the first block of time before starting the next one.

63. I would get one weekend each term to go and see my granny and auntie in Paisley and I might go and stay with them in the holidays. My brother and I would not tend to take the same weekends. I didn't get any visits at school apart from on sports day and parents evening if my mum was in Scotland. It wasn't actively encouraged. Very few parents came into the school and it meant there was little observation of the atmosphere. The atmosphere in the boarding house was us just waiting for the next time we would get into trouble.
64. I don't remember anyone ever inspecting the boarding houses. If it happened I didn't see it and wasn't asked to speak to anyone.

*Siblings/contact*

65. I had a wee bit more contact with my brother at school when I started in S1. Often that tended to be on a Saturday when he needed some money and he'd say hello. Then he got into smoking and I'd be hiding cigarettes for him. I was such a quiet person that no-body suspected me.

*Healthcare*

66. The first matron was always really lovely and I have no negative feelings about her, she was a lovely older lady. I can picture her with curly hair, she was called Mrs Harris. She had to be firm and she couldn't have favourites, but she was compassionate.
67. After the evening bath we'd brush our teeth. I had a lot of fillings in my teeth. I had a toothbrush and toothpaste but nobody showed me how to brush my teeth and it was left up to us. I often didn't brush my teeth and got lots of fillings as a result. It was just another thing that wasn't going on. If you did run out of toothpaste in mid-week you weren't allowed to go out and buy any more until the weekend. We had set periods to go out to see the dentist in Crieff, as a house.
68. I was very ill once when I was in P6. I was so cold I went to sit in the warm room where they dried the clothes. I was eventually sent to bed and I was there for three

days. I was told I was being dramatic. I think I had tonsillitis. The doctor came out. I was studying when I was in bed as I had a test to go back to. If I had a cold after that I just got on with being in school. There was never any paracetamol or medicines given out if you were unwell.

69. If you were feeling unwell you'd normally tell your friend and they would tell the staff for you. You would know you were ill but the staff didn't believe you. There was one time when the whole dorm was in bed and half the school was off in my P7 year. It was a flu bug. They did bring meals in and they were disgusting and cold.
70. Nobody spoke to us about the changes to expect during puberty. We were just told not to go anywhere near boys or have a boyfriend. We had to rely on each other to deal with puberty and periods. We couldn't get into the town until the weekend to buy any sanitary products. I wasn't aware of matron helping girls with a supply of sanitary products.
71. One of the senior girls, I don't want to give her name, I liked her as she was lovely. She had a massive chest and there used to be a doctor, Dr Jarvis, from a Crieff practice, who came in once a year to give us all a check-up. The pupils had come from all over the globe. We got our height and weight taken and the doctor always used to comment on the size of her chest. She did stand out amongst the others and she was a lovely bubbly girl and she would get a comment from the doctor every time as if there was something wrong with her. It happened every year and she'd be so embarrassed when she came out of the room.
72. I hated those annual check-ups. He didn't manhandle us and it was just his comments and he'd known the girl since she was a little girl. It was said in front of anybody else who would be in the room. The doctor wasn't by himself with her. The rest of us were waiting outside to see him and we had to queue up to see the doctor in just our underwear. I didn't like this and I found it humiliating.
73. The girl with the big breasts had eating problems. She had bulimia although I didn't know the term at the time. She would binge and someone would comment to her that

she'd put weight on and she'd go away to throw up. Other people were not eating or were binge eating and throwing up. I stopped eating puddings for a while as I thought they were causing me to have fat legs. There was no terminology for eating disorders and no-body was picking up on it.

74. I'm not aware of anyone who self-harmed. I think my male friend [REDACTED] was mentally scarred and don't know what he was doing to himself. I think I would have noticed any signs of self-harming on anyone as there was no privacy to do that. Also, we weren't all such bitches that we wouldn't pick up if somebody was really unhappy.
75. I was very naïve in those days at boarding school. I didn't even know the term gay when I left school. That came later. I'd heard the term pen-pushing. It was a term for gay sex. We used to have inter school discos with other boarding schools, one of which was Queen Victoria's in Dunblane. It was called the pen-pushing school. The pupils from my school would say 'don't touch them. They're all pen pushers' or 'they're all gay'.

#### *Running away*

76. I didn't run away. I had nowhere to run to. Other house people ran away, but they always ended up coming back. We were stuck in the middle of nowhere.

#### *Bed Wetting*

77. There was bed wetting in my dorms and we never told anyone about it. Girls just turned their mattress over when no one else was in the room and the staff didn't know. You just didn't show weakness, I possibly did it, although I don't remember doing it. I'm sure I wouldn't have got away lightly.

#### *Discipline*

78. The school could be brutal too and there were severe punishments, but it was manageable. There were also day pupils in the school and that toned down the



boarding house issues. They had no idea what we were going back to in the boarding house. It meant you could have friends outwith the boarding house. I was invited to day pupil's parties and once I was told if I went to their party I couldn't go home for the weekend. That was horrible for someone of nine years old, having to make that choice. I didn't go to the party as I wanted to go home. I think it was Mrs <sup>BPP</sup> [REDACTED] who made that rule for me.

79. You could be gated and not allowed into the town and you had to sit in your room at weekend and you were made an example of. That was a big punishment as it was your release from school and the house, and also you got to buy things. It was used frequently as punishment. Some people might have a whole term of being gated if they'd done something so heinous. I can't remember what that would be to merit two or three weeks of punishment.
80. The discipline in school could be brutal in the era of belting and shouting very harshly. They did belt pupils by P7. There was a lot of shouting in secondary school if someone had done something wrong and a lot of public belting in front of the class. Girls were belted, but I never witnessed a girl being belted, only the boys. I was aware that girls were belted, as people I knew got the belt. It was six of the belt, commonly called 'six of the best'. Also some teachers had a cane. Some teachers had the belt and they put it out in every lesson and laid it on the old fashioned metal radiator and told the class it was there warming up for us.

### **Abuse at Morrison's Academy**

#### *Knockearn boarding house*

81. There was an atmosphere in the boarding house and I just never let myself go and kept myself to myself. Not long after I arrived at boarding school, after about four or five weeks, my hot water bottle was emptied over my bed. I had to sleep in it. The duvet was wet and everything else. I just had to put up with it. I knew who had done it.

It was girls I was in the same dorm room with. They were giggling as I was wriggling in my wet bed and they knew why.

82. It was a kind of initiation for me. If I'd clyped on them that would have been it, I just knew that. It would have been hell for me. There would have been reprisals and they'd just do something else. I think they were doing whatever they felt they needed to do to survive. It was all about survival and everyone did something to survive. I just retracted into myself and I didn't say anything. It gave me brownie points, so I survived. I ended up as good friends with them later on in school and they were still there when I left.
83. I heard of other stories of bullying. People's heads would be flushed down the toilet. That would be a favourite tactic. I never got that, but I got near to getting it. I didn't see it happening to anyone else because I kept myself out of being involved with a lot of people for a lot of the time. It took me years to get involved with others. I know people got hurt, but I kept apart from it because the culture of bullying is so intense and if you get involved you'll be next. I just didn't want to be next. I was already grappling with the loneliness of being away from home, I didn't need that going on in my life as well.
84. I developed crafty ways of staying in the school and avoiding going back to the boarding house after school or at weekends. I used to find clubs and have things to do. By the Christmas of that first term I'd hardened to it all and had witnessed enough that I told myself to sit down and read a book and ignore what else is going on and laugh at things. At boarding school I had just enough information about what was going on. I'd also be observing what was going on all the time. Every year it was just the same and someone new would be picked on.
85. I was probably not immune to doing something myself in order to survive. It's not in my character to do it and I probably didn't, but I may have laughed at someone or something when I shouldn't have. That sort of thing. Once I had been there a few years, and certainly in secondary school, I was a big protector of the little ones in the primary school. It was ghastly the way they were treated.

86. I stayed in the same boarding house in my secondary school. I changed dorm rooms as they didn't stay static and depended on the make-up of the school year. I was in all of the dorm rooms at some point. By fourth year I still didn't have any more privacy in the house. There was never any privacy. People could see what was in your cupboard. The swill bucket was still going out. You dress in the same room together. By then we had showers and with curtains, but I don't know if that was for privacy so much as to stop the water going everywhere.
87. When I was a senior pupil, other younger pupils would confide in me as they knew I wouldn't gossip about them and I would keep their confidence. They would confide in me about sex, periods and school issues. Things I had no idea about.

*Relationships with housemistresses*

88. We had no channels of complaint. If we did complain, we were the ones with the problem. We'd usually be told our parents would have to be informed and what would they think of you? We should be ashamed. It's disgraceful and you could be thrown out of the school. There was also a message filtered through to us that our parents didn't want us and that was why we were in a boarding school. That was the atmosphere in the boarding house, not in the school.
89. So you would never complain and when you went home in the holidays you wouldn't say anything and just tell your parents everything was fine at school. We'd be told our parents were so worried about you and don't worry your grandparents. That message was coming from our house mistress, Mrs <sup>BPP</sup> in particular, and especially when she went into her religious phase. The second one Mrs Richardson did it in the later stages of my time there, but not at the start. She was brilliant in the first year and she used to sit down with us and listen to some of our thoughts and she did change things, but that went downhill. Ultimately the pressure on the staff was probably considerable and they can't handle it and there are girls doing things that are sometimes naughty and they can't handle it.

90. Within the first four weeks at school, I went to see Mrs BPP in her flat to complain as someone had stolen my torch. She asked me who I thought might have done it. I could see it in their sitting room and her son had taken it. I spotted it straight away. It was quite distinctive with pandas on it. I pointed to it and told her it was my torch. I was told I was mistaken and it wasn't my torch and he'd never stolen it. I decided at that point that nothing of mine was going in the locker.
91. The first school holiday I had I took everything back home that I could. From then on everything that was personal I kept in my school bag and I did this for years. We just knew that Mrs BPP's youngest son used to come round the boarding house when we were at school. Sometimes we had collective moments like that in the boarding house. We had eventually got crafty to it and put stuff in certain places and we'd worked out he used to come round the boarding house.
92. We'd leave small things like a piece of chocolate in the locker to check and it would be gone when we came back from school. Then we all knew, as we'd all been in it together in our boarding house, and we'd arrange for something to be left in different lockers. It was always the younger of Mrs BPP's two sons. Not the older one, he was really nice. The younger one allegedly set fire to one of the school buildings later on in my time there. There was trouble there, I don't know what was going on.
93. Mrs BPP could also be really friendly and she would take us out to her own house as a group and we'd get a bit of freedom. She was living in a nice location near Crieff. We'd do things like build camp fires. She wasn't all brutal, but when she got her thunder clouds they really took off. My first year with her was not the worst. It built up and it was in my P6 year that the real problems started and that was when she got into religion.
94. This was sometime in 1980 and she took everyone in the boarding house to see someone called Luis Palau who was a faith giver and preacher like Billy Graham. That was when my troubles really began. I was very anti-religion at that point and religion was being rammed down my throat. I rang my mum and told her I didn't want to go to this event and I couldn't tolerate it. A whole bus load from the boarding house went

apart from me. I think it was happening at Celtic Park. I spent the night with our matron instead and she lived in Academy House. My mum had phoned Mrs BPP and said under no circumstances was I going to see some spiritual leader.

95. The next day, we were all traipsed into the common room and everyone was shouted at that they had given over their souls to the faith, but I could leave the room as I'd not been involved. So I was made to leave the room. Before that, she was telling everyone, they'd dedicated their life to God and how dare they, 24 hours later, give it up again. It was hellish. She gated everyone and that meant being punished. It turned out on the bus to Celtic Park there was both boys and girls and some of them had been getting off with each other on the bus back. There had been some of the boys from Academy House on the bus as well as girls from my house. That was just the act of Satan to her. The children were only from P6 and P7, doing what kids do. I didn't know all of this as I'd been away for the night at the matron's. They'd all come back to the house and been laughing and joking about what had gone on.
96. As I'd not gone to the event I was then being told 'you're not religious' and that was taken against me as well. I was damned if I went and damned if I didn't. I have no idea who sanctioned this religious visit. Apart from my mum who phoned up to say I wasn't to go, no other parent knew it was going on. My dad at that point in his life was an atheist and he would have been mortified. My parents were very much against that kind of thing. My parents had actually gone to see Billy Graham in the 1960s in Glasgow. I've seen him myself in subsequent years and I wonder myself now as an adult what on earth would have gone on at that night.
97. After the event, they'd all sworn to the word of this preacher Luis Palau they had to go to prayer meeting on a Wednesday and she tried to get me to go too. But we had prep to do in the evenings. She'd become obsessed by this prayer meeting.
98. It had happened about February or March time and it was becoming more obvious Mrs BPP was going off her head. She was having marital problems. She had another baby at some point and I can't remember if it was while she was at school or afterwards. The baby was another boy and she kept putting ribbons in its hair. She

was having a breakdown. Her husband was having an affair with someone in the bible group which was why she got so obsessed. We all knew this. These things get around the school. It's a small community. Her mood swings became even worse.

99. There were times at dinner and the house would be at their big long table in the refectory. Her black mood would come on and she would shout at someone to get out of the room as we wouldn't eat our spaghetti. Spaghetti Bolognese at Morrison's Academy was like pigswill. At the end of every meal of it, no-body ate it from all seven or eight boarding houses. It all ended up in the slops.
100. On this occasion we were all just sitting there and feeling nauseous at the prospect of this food. She just slammed her fist down and told us or someone to get out and said somebody must eat it. She would make people eat some of it and tell them they should be grateful to have food. We all had to sit there in silence and this included all the other boarding houses sitting round us. We had Dalmhor house to our left, Academy to our right, Glenearn in front of us, Croftwheat to the far right and Ogilvie and Benheath to the far left. We were right in the middle of all of the other houses.
101. Where we sat was the entrance to the canteen section and the exit and we were forced to sit there and everyone in that room. Although we had staggered starts for meals, eventually everyone would end up in the room at one time to eat. The whole room would go quiet and hundreds of boarders sitting and watching this person being told to eat the food until their meal was finished. Then they'd go and be sick when they got out of the room. We all had sympathy for that person and looking at Mrs BPP thinking what a nutter. We had to sit and wait for that person to finish the food. That was what the atmosphere was like, it was full of tension and us wondering what she was going to do next.
102. There were other house masters and house mistresses sat at their house tables. There would be a house master and normally the matron sitting at the same table as the students. My house had a big long table for twenty-four of us and matron could be in the middle or at the end of the table. Usually we had a seating plan for the week and students would put out napkins for everyone before the meal and that was one of

the chores. They needed to know the seating plan beforehand. This meant that other staff members saw what was happening at our table.

103. Mrs <sup>BPP</sup> left at the end of that school year. Her behaviour got progressively worse. We went home for summer holidays at the end of P6 to come back to a new house mistress. I can't remember if there were other incidents with Mrs <sup>BPP</sup> as I think I've blanked them out. Every day was tension and wondering what mood she was in. Mrs Richardson, the second house mistress, didn't force people to eat and the dining room got better.


*Incident with Primary 6 boy*

104. There was an incident in P6 when a boy, called [REDACTED], went home and never came back. In the boarding school, it's like its own community and you get to know the names and faces and when someone new comes in the girls notice there's a new face. Also the boys were quite keen as it was another person to get to know, otherwise it's just the same faces, year after year. A new boy had come in and he was popular and then he never came back after a weekend away. The rumours started and somebody was expelled and there was more tension.
105. The boy was in Academy House and in my year at school. The rumours were that he'd gone home for the weekend and his parents discovered that he'd been whipped across his back. He never came back to school. He was fagging for an older senior boy who was then expelled. I don't know the name of the senior boy. I can vaguely remember his face.
106. There were shockwaves through the school particularly our class. It wasn't talked about, but we as children talked about it a lot. We weren't allowed to ask about it. It made us realise that this could happen to us. The girls' houses didn't have fagging as such. You'd still get picked on by senior girls to do chores for them or give them your pocket money for themselves or they'd steal your clothes or hairdryer because they liked them. It wasn't done as openly as in the boys' houses, but it was going on.

*Academy House*

107. Academy House was a purpose-built boarding house and it was where our house matron lived in a self-contained unit. She was matron for just Knockearn House. Academy also had a rumpus room for the boys that was their kick-around-ball-room. It had shatter proof windows. In our boarding house we used to be able to see into the rumpus room and could watch boys getting beaten up by other boys. One boy would have another one by his neck or they would be kicking each other. It really was called the rumpus room and that's what everyone called it.



108. I was friendly with a boy from Glenearn House. We were both in the same classes. It was an easy friendship and if we were in country dancing classes he'd always ask me to dance. By the time I left the school he had severe mental health problems. To this day I wonder what happened to him, his mood was going downhill and he was political and became communist in his outlook. He then called himself .
109. One of my last lessons at the school was country dancing at Christmas time in S4 and he picked me as it was my farewell dance. He told me I was lucky as I was getting out of here. I said I know and he told me how much he was going to miss me. He was considered to be a bit weird and he got a bit smelly at one point and wasn't looking after himself and there was no-one there to tell him to put some deodorant on. Then he'd get picked on at school.

*Senior girls*

110. Moving on into secondary school was ok. In the boarding house I was older. A huge new batch of people came in and they got it all and I stood back and kept studying and kept out of what else was going on.
111. One of the other houses had a girl whose father was a doctor and she was selling the pill for money, just one at a time. That story was going round. Around that time, in my



P6 year, there was a senior girl in my boarding house who was going out every night. I had a ground floor room and my bed as right next to the window and I was letting her in and out at night. I had to do it and if I hadn't done it she would have made things difficult for me. She was having a relationship with day pupil boy. Then she suddenly left the school and I believe she was pregnant. If I had been found out for letting her in and out of the boarding house I would have been expelled. I had to go into the boarding mistress' flat once to let her in as we couldn't get the window open. That was really scary and stressful for me.

112. The school would have been horrified if they knew that by the time I was in fourth year several of the senior girls in my house were out having sex in the toilets of the Crieff Hydro with boys from Morrison's. We were all covering for it. The staff had no idea. In senior years you were allowed out for your own walk on a Sunday afternoon and they'd go to the Hydro to meet boys.

#### *Glenearn House*

113. There was an incident in Glenearn House, I can't remember my age, I think I was in second year in senior school. We were all seated in the refectory and they were one of the last houses to come in. There was about seventy boys in that house and it was quite a sight to watch them file into the room. They came in and sat down at their table. The prep master, I can't recall his name but he was a physics teacher, for their house came into the room to take his place at table and that was when the boys en masse, from the youngest boy to the oldest sixth formers, all stood up and the atmosphere in the refectory was chilling. They had planned it in advance. It was a standing up protest, not a respectful standing up. There was a lot of noise from them standing up and then the silence. They stood for two minutes.
114. A black boy had left the school very suddenly, one of very few in the school, even though he was eighteen, and within weeks of leaving the school for good. I don't remember his name. He'd had a drink and he was expelled. It was my understanding the prep master had been involved in the decision making and in the boy's departure from the school. Something had happened in that house that was so profound that

had organised the whole house to act as one. After Glenearn stood up, Academy House boys stood up as well. It still chills me to this day to recall it. Something really serious had happened in Glenearn House.

*My brother*

115. This was in a time period when pupils were getting into trouble all the time. My brother was massively belted and he was caught in the town having a can of beer. My brother is a red head and instantly recognisable. He was belted six times for this offence. That was the punishment, that was what they got, but there was never any humanity involved in dealing with a seventeen year old boy. There was no consideration to giving him lines instead, it was just straight to getting the belt out.
116. Someone from the school phoned my mum to say it really pains me to do this, but I'm going to have to belt your son as he was caught with this can of beer. He had been noted by a member of the town that he was seen amongst a group of boys, but because of his red hair he was picked out and in uniform. This man from the town complained about anything he could do with the school. He was not related to the school or connected to it, I can't remember his name now. He used to complain about us in church, where he was an Elder. He went to the same one as Glenearn, Knockearn and another house went. If we so much as coughed or sneezed this member of the town would complain and we'd all get told off.
117. The school did not often phone parents before belting their child. I don't know why they phoned my mum on that occasion, but they phoned my mum. Me and my brother were very different characters with my brother constantly in trouble and me who didn't say boo to a goose. When my mum went to a parents evening once and was speaking to my chemistry teacher about me and then asked him about my brother, as he also taught him, the teacher had no idea we were siblings. My brother had stopped caring about breaking rules as what was the worst that could happen to him, just another belting.

### **Reporting of abuse at Morrison's Academy**

118. There was never any opportunity to take any issues to anyone in the boarding house or in the school.

### **Leaving Morrison's Academy**

119. I got to the end of third year in senior school and I'd had enough. My brother left school that year. I begged my parents to let me leave the school in the summer holidays I turned fifteen. It wasn't easy, by that time my parents were divorced and my mum lived in England and my dad in Saudi Arabia. My mum suggested I ask to move boarding house and I told her it was too late for that to happen. I was done with the place and I couldn't stand it anymore, being told off by people who were not interested. There were years of being told if I did anything wrong there would be severe problems coming and my parents would know and they'd be disappointed in me and I should be ashamed of myself. That was the message I got from 1979 to 1985. The school operated a black mark system and they added them up through the term. Psychologically we knew those black marks were being added up.
120. I gave notice to the school that I intend to leave and I had to go back and do another term as they required notice of my leaving. I was just treading water from the September to the December when I left. I was so de-mob happy. I started smoking that term too and I would be in trouble when I was back in the boarding house as they could smell the smoke. The punishment was to be named and shamed in front of everyone and having senior privileges taken away. In December, my dad came to pick me up and take me out of school. That was it and I never looked back really.
121. When I was first in Knockearn House I shared a dorm room with two sisters who were from Pakistan and of mixed race. The youngest sister who was seven when I shared with her left a year after me as she couldn't stand it anymore. When she asked for her school trunk back her parents came to pick it up and the house mistress just shoved it out of the door. The school claimed the girl was difficult. She wasn't. I'd known her

since she was seven and she was getting a bit of attitude as she'd had enough, but that was their dismissive attitude when you left and the fees were no longer paid.

### **Life after being in boarding school**

122. I initially moved to live with my mum in Gloucestershire knowing my dad would go to work in another oil country. I started at a state school there and sat exams and coasted my way through school as I felt far ahead of the others. I scraped through my O' levels. It was a big culture change for me in the state school. I struggled to settle and I was bullied for being Scottish. It was easier to deal with as I was going home at the end of the day and I got to spend more time with my mum and I got to know her better. I stayed there for just less than two years.
123. I was finding it difficult living with my mum after being in a regimented existence at school and no-one was telling me what to do anymore. I didn't have to do my homework anymore, so I didn't. I went to a local college to do my A' levels and then went to Glasgow University.
124. Sometime after I left Morrison's I heard that one of the lads in my year [REDACTED] himself when he was at home. His sister found him and I knew her as she was in my boarding house and that was how I found out. I kept in a touch with a few people after I left. When I found out I was really, really saddened. He'd been relentlessly bullied. He'd had [REDACTED] as a child and couldn't do sports so well, although he was good at cricket.

### **Impact**

125. When me and my husband were planning to have a family we went into a nursery and a lot of memories came back and I said, 'no my child is not going to anyone else'. I gave up work when my son was born and that had a big financial impact. I could accept school for him but I couldn't give him to anyone else in a private nursery to take care of when he was small. I had a level of distrust of other people to take care of him.

126. I continue to deal with social situations in the way I dealt with the boarding house. I assess busy situations, for example at the hairdressers, and sit quietly and read a magazine to inform myself of what was going on in the world and I then can have a conversation about it with the hairdresser. I'm just not that interested in the trivia that's going on as described in those magazines or what was going on in the boarding house.
127. Watching my son grow up I would think back to school and imagine as a group of teenagers we must have been difficult to manage, but there was no humanity ever shown. If you got into trouble it went on for days. My son was bullied in primary school and I picked up on signs quickly as he was bed wetting and that was not the sort of thing picked up on at Morrison's. There was no way I would ever have sent him to a boarding school. When my son was born we both had it written into our new wills that if we should die he would not be sent to a boarding school.
128. I don't court trouble in any fashion and will abide by any rule as I don't want trouble. I'm terrified of authority. I don't make new friends easily as I'm very cautious about people, and women in particular. I find it hard to trust women and I've experienced how nasty they can be. I found all the little groups of women associated with my son's education to be really excruciating. I've carried it all my life and I'm a very nervous person. I don't have self-belief even now and frequently think of myself as a failure, when I know I'm not, but I still think it. That comes from Morrison's, nothing there was ever good enough. That makes me feel angry with the school.
129. I've only recently opened up to my mum. I told her I'd contacted the Inquiry. I didn't want to upset her. She never realised just how bad it was and she wished she could have done something.
130. I really care for the disadvantaged. I recently worked on a project for a company that looked after people with very low academic achievement and we really fought for this community interest company and save it from being in debt. I really felt for these people as nobody fights for them.

131. I hate religion. I remember the man from Crieff who was Elder in the second church we went to as a boarding house and he reported my brother drinking in the town. I have so much contempt for that kind of behaviour in society. He was reporting on children who were just behaving like children.
132. I think about my Morrison's school experience every day. That started when I went to university and was bumping into people from Morrison's around campus. I didn't want any reminders of the school. My brother has been to a school reunion and I couldn't stomach the idea.

### **Records**

133. I have a number of schools photos from my time at Morrison's and my mother still has my school reports. I have never asked them for my records.

### **Lessons to be Learned**

134. Boarding schools might be a necessity but they don't need to be cruel. For me the lesson is about isolation. I felt isolated. It's damaging. There are so many children in the boarding house, but you can't get any headspace, it's so busy. Activity is going on around you but you're not part of it and that is isolating.
135. Belittling of children leads to emotional issues and confidence issues later on. It leads to children becoming adults who get involved in drug taking, alcoholism and promiscuity. Having so many rules and regulations for children and constantly reinforced will cause problems.
136. So many of the rules at Morrison's were pointless like having to get permission from the headmaster to undo our top buttons in class on a hot day. Crieff would get snow every winter and we had to wear our wellies for six weeks even though the snow had

gone away in case our shoes got spoiled. We wore wellies to school and ended up with chafing on our legs, chilblains and sweaty feet.

**Hopes for the Inquiry**

- 137. I hope that my evidence might corroborate someone else’s experiences. They can come away from the Inquiry knowing it wasn’t just them that suffered. I hope my experiences don’t happen again to children in institutions. Parents pay money to the schools thinking their children are safe when they live thousands of miles away, when actually they are being emotionally destroyed.
  
- 138. Bullying in schools persists and my son has gone through it. I spotted it quickly and my husband and I were able to deal with it quickly and we removed my son from the situation he was in. He had me to talk to and that was the big thing. I was there to listen to him. Nobody listened to us in boarding school.

**Other information**

- 139. 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..... 10 November 2020 .....