

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Supplementary Witness Statement of

HLB

Support person present: No

1. My name is HLB My date of birth is 1980. My contact details are known to the inquiry.
2. I have already provided a statement to the Inquiry, dated 16 October 2020. After signing my statement, I remembered some more incidents from my time at Loretto Junior and Senior School. I wish to provide a supplementary statement and share these experiences with the Inquiry.

Loretto School, Musselburgh

School

3. I remember being two minutes late handing in an a thousand-word French essay. I'd spent a week on the essay. The French teacher ripped it up in front of the class and dropped it in the bin.
4. When I was in fourth form, one of the prefects who was beating me gave me a booking for making a noise in prep. I was so far behind in my homework, I had to carry on doing it after the evening house assembly at 9:30 pm. This was also the time when we were supposed to report bookings to the housemaster. I forgot to report the booking because of all the work. At bedtime, just after lights out, the housemaster opened the dorm door. He said that I had failed to report a booking so it would be doubled and I would have to get up at 6:30 am for exercise punishment in the yard. I pleaded with him, saying that it was a mistake, that I had been overwhelmed with work, and that I

could report it tomorrow, but he insisted. I said, "How is it fair we get punished for making a tiny noise while the prefects who hand out these things beat small boys and get nothing?" There was a long silence. Then he said, "Well, I don't know about that... Just make sure you're up in the morning." Then he left.

Leisure time

5. A very common activity for some boys in the junior school and third and fourth forms was to make each other faint repeatedly. This would be done in free time when staff weren't around. There would be groups of three to eight boys. They would take turns to hyperventilate, and then the rest would push hard on the artery just below the heart, until the person passed out and dropped to the floor. They could spend entire afternoons doing it.

Birthdays and Christmas

6. I remember always trying to hide mail and cards when it was my birthday to stop people knowing and prevent a beating, but they always knew.

Abuse at Loretto

Bullying

7. In B form, the whole school took a trip to Vogrie Country Park. At one point in the afternoon, a couple of kids decided to explore the side of a burn. The staff said it would be okay for the kids to go in the water. Two kids in A form – prefects – then grabbed me, in front of a staff member, and started swinging me from side to side. I was screaming at them to stop while everyone else was laughing. Then they threw me into the burn. It was not particularly deep. The water was horribly cold and muddy. My knees landed on the bedrock and I was completely immersed. It was so painful that I cried, but everyone just carried on and then more kids started wading in to play. I hobbled for days on bruised knees. We were just supposed to get on with these things.

8. In A form, in English class, a boy who was bullying me wrote an essay for prep, ripping me to pieces. Parts of it were real – mocking the everyday bullying I faced and how hard I worked – and parts of it were fictionalised. The sole aim was to cause me maximum humiliation, ridicule, and distress. He was awarded full marks and asked by the teacher to read it aloud to the class. Everyone apart from me was laughing. The teacher found it hilarious. At one point she turned to me, laughing, and said, “Are you okay with this?” I just nodded quietly and feigned a smile. It just reinforced the cycle of bullying and hate.
9. In C form, a boy in my class strangled another in A form and nearly killed him. The intent was there. I think people pulled him away to save him. He was a terrifyingly violent child. It felt like he could kill any of us any time. He was suspended for that. I still remember the victim crying and shaking hours afterwards.
10. Later, I think when he was age fourteen, in a senior school rugby game against Edinburgh Academy, the same boy decided he was going to maim the star player of the opposition. He just ran at him when the boy wasn’t looking and didn’t have the ball and clothes-lined him around the neck, knocking him to the ground. It put the boy in hospital. It could have broken his neck. The perpetrator was sent off. It was another *Sliding Doors* moment – the victim went on to become one of Scotland’s greatest rugby players.
11. The boys had a word and hand action to gesticulate their total lack of empathy. It was said all day around the junior and senior schools, every day. “Stang!” coupled with a flick of the fingers at someone meant, “I don’t care. I’m glad you’re hurting.” It completely normalised sociopathy.

Fagging, prefects and bullying at the senior school

12. At paragraph 126 of my statement dated 16 October 2020, I refer to an incident where my brother’s teeth were damaged. The punch actually knocked my brother’s front teeth out. He put them back in, but they went black within 24 hours.

13. There was another incident of strangling that I can recall from senior school, where a sixth form boy strangled one of his classmates. I didn't see it, but people talked about it. The victim was blue in the face and it was still going. Bystanders started screaming for help. I believe people pulled him off in the end. The perpetrator was suspended after that.
14. At paragraph 155, I wish to add that in my case, we are talking about thousands of incidents over more than a thousand days.

Sexual abuse

15. In my first term of junior school, I recall an incident in the tub room at night. I had gone to the toilet alone, when one of the senior prefects came into the room. When I came out of the toilet, he started talking about penises. He said you can make penises hard if you shake them and I felt panic. He grabbed his penis in his shorts, shook it, and then he said, "You do it." I shouted, "No!" and ran from the room, straight to bed. I never told a staff member. I don't know what his intentions were. Nothing like that happened to me again, but it was greatly distressing.
16. In Hope House, upper sixth form boys would order third formers to come and see them naked in the bath.
17. In third form, one of the Heads of Houses, aged eighteen, walked into a third year dorm just after lights out. He pulled down his trousers and boxer shorts then poured fluorescent liquid all over his pubic area. He then shaved it in front of them.
18. In the dorms in fourth form, the heads of dorm, who were fifth years, ordered "group wanks" for the dorm after lights out on several occasions. It was just the most disgusting thing. They announced it a day in advance. More than half the dorm would be in on it, and excited. Three of us at the bottom of the dorm would just keep as quiet as possible and put a pillow over our heads and pretend it wasn't happening. One fifth year would read a story from a pornographic magazine under torchlight while everyone

else lay in their beds, and there would be people in the dorm talking throughout about how aroused they were. I ran out of the room several times.

Life after leaving school

19. I remember a few incidents with former pupils after I left school. Aged nineteen, a year after leaving school, I was in an Edinburgh bar with many people from school days. Everyone was enjoying themselves. The alpha male from my year group and boarding house, who for eight years had bullied me physically and mentally amidst spells of friendship, came up to me, entirely unprovoked, and said, "You know how in these films you see the guy who was a loser at school years later always ends up a really cool, popular guy? Well it's not true. You were a total loser at school, and you're still a loser now." I've no idea what triggered him. I just thanked him and walked away.
20. Two years later, when I was 21, I was at a friend's birthday party at a hotel in Edinburgh, just walking through the bar. The same alpha male, in the middle of a conversation with two others, just grabbed me, put me in a crushing headlock, and then, with clenched knuckles, punched me in the head. He then withdrew, a little startled by himself. The people around him looked shocked. Fortunately, not many people saw. He said, "I'm sorry. You just make me angry sometimes." I made a joke of it to defuse the situation, and we just carried on a conversation like normal.
21. A similar thing happened at a Hogmanay party in Edinburgh that year. At one point, I walked into the bathroom. A boy from the year below me at school was there. We'd always been in different houses but had been rugby teammates for years. I said hello. He looked like he'd had a lot to drink. All of a sudden he grabbed me around the neck with his forearm. I thought he would kill me. I could barely breathe and was absolutely powerless. I managed to ask if he was okay. He just whispered, in a sort of state of psychosis, that a girl was making him angry. He held on for more than a minute. I was desperate for someone to walk into the room and save me. And then he just calmly let go, smiled, and walked out. I don't know why these people behaved like this, especially years after school, but it revealed how messed up many of them are. They are

husbands, parents, people of influence. Many of them are deeply damaged and they don't even know it.

Impact

22. At the end of paragraph 177, I wish to add that my friends and I, turning forty, still wake up with nightmares about school.

Lessons to be learned

23. The Stanford prison experiment lasted six days before it was shut down for getting out of hand. Lorretto has been going for 193 years.
24. I think the police and schools should shine a light on any staff members who were ever suspended or "resigned" abruptly from live-in institutions. Traditionally private schools have allowed predators to simply walk away from their crimes and continue elsewhere. They will find many case if they follow those trails, and prevent potential future abuse.
25. 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.....

HLB

Dated..... 17 December 2020