

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

CCN

Support person present: No

1. My name is CCN. My date of birth is 1958. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before Gordonstoun

2. Prior to going to Gordonstoun I stayed with my parents and two sisters in Sussex and attended Vinehall prep school. Prep school was an unhappy experience. The school was not run very well and the headmaster and his wife were absolutely unsuitable as school leaders. My two sisters attended local day school whilst as a later stage my brother went to a different public school.
3. When my mother was young she was brought up in Aberlour and attended the prep school to Gordonstoun. I was sent to board at Gordonstoun, approximately six hundred miles from my home. I was thirteen years old when I went to Gordonstoun.
4. We were on holiday during the summer of 1971 and we visited Gordonstoun. I began attending the school in September. The school was set in a beautiful location, but I found the boarding house to be very austere. The seven different houses were spread over a large campus.

Routine at Gordonstoun

5. On arrival I did not know anyone at the school.
6. At Gordonstoun there were about four hundred and twenty pupils divided into different schools with approximately sixty in each. Each house contained boys of all ages. At the time of my arrival there the headmaster was John Kempe. I was allocated to Altyre house but later moved to Cumming House because of severe bullying.
7. Altyre House was feral and I found it to be the worst of houses. The housemaster, James Fitzgibbon had no control over the house. Both James and John Kemp have since died. Weak management of the school and houses had a bad effect on the social cohesion of the school.
8. In September during my first term the senior boys were good and did their duties without there being too many issues. The behaviour of the older boys deteriorated. I am not sure if this was an effect of the school deteriorating, it was difficult to say what was the cause. The relationship with my peers and the boys at the top of the school became abusive.
9. There was an assistant house master and he possibly stayed within one of the rooms. The head boy had his own bedsit. The remainder lived in dormitories with fifteen to twenty boys. Study rooms had six desks and were very cramped. Later in school life there were other study rooms used by just two or three boys in each. The larger study rooms and dormitories did not allow for any peace or privacy while you were at Gordonstoun. They later built more houses on the grounds and the study rooms for one person became more common, which was a huge improvement.
10. The school had a linen room where ladies worked. Some of the boys would use the ladies as agony aunts. There were no other female staff giving pastoral care. I do not recall any cleaning staff and we would look after the dormitory houses and study room ourselves.

11. In my second year girls were admitted, as the school became co-ed. When I left there were around 120 girls and now I believe girls make up about forty per cent of the intake.
12. There was a telephone box for each house. This was situated outside the house and was used for contact between the boys and the families. We would have to queue in the cold in those days if we wanted to use it. In later years the telephones were re-sited into the halls of each house.

Mornings and bedtime

13. We would be woken about seven o'clock and then go out running in our shorts for a short distance. It was then back to the locker room and a cold shower. We then dressed and had about a half mile walk for breakfast in Gordonstoun House and then into chapel. You would be carrying all the books you required for the day. They amounted to quite a weight.

Food

14. Food initially within the school was terrible. In later years a refectory was built and things improved. We supplemented our diet from outside. I recall Scottish cheddar and oat cakes with fondness.

School

15. Classes started between eight thirty and nine and there was a tea break in the morning, and after lunch we had activities. The formal sports we took part in were rugby and cricket. After activities it was back to the house for tea and toast. Some days there were more classes about five o'clock for around an hour and a half. Between six thirty and seven it was supper time, prep was between eight and nine and into bed anytime between nine forty five and ten thirty.

16. On Saturdays we attended classes in the morning and organised sport in the afternoon. Sundays we attended chapel in the morning. It was completely feral the rest of the day.
17. On Wednesdays it was services day. We were part of the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), the public school version of air or army cadets. Services also involved Coast Guard, Navy, Fire Service and other services. We would attend for about two hours in uniform. It began in first year with junior boys attending expedition training learning to use primus stoves and tents. We would visit the services during the first year and at the end of that year we chose the service we preferred. I joined the Navy cadets.
18. We would be encouraged to cycle and visit some of the local sites. Sometimes that ride would be about fifteen miles.
19. My O-levels were disastrous, as were my A-levels. This was not uncommon at Gordonstoun as the education standard was not great. My achievements were definitely impacted by bullying issues. They did not breed achievers. Having talked with others this was not too dissimilar to many other public schools. Staff do make more of an effort now but are restricted by rules and government directions.
20. The education at Gordonstoun was second rate. They had a great difficulty in recruiting teaching staff because of the remoteness. Some of the staff were also involved in expeditions. They could be away on expeditions during the school terms as well as during holidays.

Holidays

21. My parents visited me once a year while I was at the school but not during half term. I would go home during the holidays. The boys would usually meet at Kings Cross for the return journey. Usually no one stayed at the school during the main holidays.

Healthcare

22. There was a sanatorium at the school with a doctor and two permanent nurses. The doctor visited each day and there were about twenty beds available. If there was any need to see someone for any medical matter it was not a problem to visit the doctor.

Abuse at Gordonstoun

23. There was a general deterioration with the relationship with my peers and I was having a hard time. There was abuse from many directions. I became very defensive whenever I was under pressure and this impacted throughout my adult life.
24. The school prefects (Colour bearers) were some of the older boys. The white stripes were house prefects. They along with colour bearer candidates handed out penalty drills to the others in their respective houses. This would involve walking or running around the south lawn for half an hour to an hour. This was a tedious punishment and was handed out on an individual basis.
25. The house had an additional system of punishment called emergency calls. This consisted of time spent doing domestic chores. It was handed out by whatever colour bearer was on duty. The punishments could be for anything and would include running or walking in lines. Other punishments could be for being late for classes, or sports.
26. The prefects did not control the general nastiness between the boys. There was very little guidance in how they should behave. Perhaps if they had tried to be nicer things would have been better.
27. I moved to Cumming House because of bullying issues in Altyre House. It took almost two years because my housemaster was hardly interested. My experience of abuse was similar to many at the school. Some boys became involved in bullying cliques and thereby managed to avoid being bullied. House masters were aware of

the abuse and bullying but did very little about it. I do not think the head was effective in his role.

28. Peter Larkman was the housemaster at Cumming House and he later became the head master at another school. He was more involved when abuse was reported and would follow up on those incidents. This house was not feral as the previous one. He could not solve all the issues but did try to improve things.

Reporting of abuse at Gordonstoun

29. In the main the people did not use their authority. There were things reported to them but most of the issues were not acted upon. This would range from mild to extreme repetitive teasing escalating to more serious assaults. I was aware of some of the incidents.
30. I did report some of the abuse to the housemaster at his house. I was given a cup of tea from his wife and then sent on my way without any further action. The housemasters wife was nice to the pupils but quite meek. The staff probably afraid of losing their role as there were no similar jobs locally.
31. Other than unpleasantness at Gordonstoun I did not see anything that would warrant police involvement. My parents were aware that I was unhappy at Gordonstoun. We did look at other schools but a move never materialised.

Life after Gordonstoun

32. After leaving school I joined the Merchant Navy. I was there for about six years before I left. I really enjoyed the sailing aspect of life. I later went into financial services and computer industry and have been there ever since. My career has been marked by my mistrust of authority.

33. I am married and have three boys. They all attended private schools the youngest went to a different school. Two of them have done really well but my other son found his experiences at the other school began to resemble my own experiences at Gordonstoun, as a result of this he did not make it academically. They all boarded at public school but not until they were thirteen.
34. I joined a support group Boarding Concern. They believe that under thirteen's should not be in boarding schools. With my sons experience I feel they may be correct.
35. In summer of 2013 there was Facebook page set up for former Gordonstoun's pupils. This grew into a membership of around a thousand people. I am no longer a member of this group as it was evident that there were things posted on this forum which were inappropriate.

Abuse to others at Gordonstoun

36. A new Facebook page was set up under the title of Independent Gordonstoun Alumni Global Support Network, "G2". I am still a member of this group. One of the members, a German girl, had some issues with what was being revealed as there were stricter libel laws in her country. [REDACTED] Within a week the group amassed around 120 members. I did not know many of those in the group. There was such an outpouring of different issues we put some restrictions on what could be discussed on the open forum, this included no publishing of staff names. People had to adhere to confidentiality or leave the group immediately.
37. During one discussion one of the members revealed a particular unpleasant experience. This led to others in the group revealing similar experiences. On this page I would subdue some of the bullying that emerged in the group. As the bullying lessened the group turned, and more people were revealing their experiences.
38. A month after starting the new group, known as "G2", I was contacted by a girl asking to talk and we exchanged numbers. She disclosed that whilst at Aberlour

House she was raped by a member of staff, (although named I prefer not to disclose his name), when she was around twelve years old. She talked to people at the school at the time but none since. She told me she was aware of other girls who had also been sexually assaulted. In the group she later revealed her identity and her allegations. I had to later her name and assign a nickname and delete references to her real identity. This was to protect her and keep it all private. The police later found another witness corroborating this allegation. Unfortunately the case failed when the witness was too unwell to attend court. The alleged rapist is therefore at liberty in Southern England.

39. I spoke with her and advised her she should be contacting the police. I had made initial approaches and obtained the name of the officer in charge who she should speak to. I made her aware that the information I had was hearsay. There was no pressure for her to talk to him but he waited for her call.
40. She was having trouble discussing the assault with her husband and kids. I was also aware how the details were affecting me. I was given advice on how to deal with this through National Association for People Abused in Childhood, (NAPAC), along with Boarding Concern and Tom Perry of Mandate Now.
41. The next night another separate lady made contact via the Facebook page. She disclosed she was raped by a senior boy when she was around fourteen years old. The young lad concerned was her boyfriend. This incident totally ruined the relationship she had with her father. She did not want to take this matter any further but we were providing a point of contact for her outpouring.
42. The following evening another girl contacted me and reported an incident. She described lying on her bed within the dormitory when she was around sixteen years of age. Some boys from one of the other houses invaded her house. Two of the boys were in bed with their girlfriends. Another boy leapt onto her bed and was trying to have sex with her. She fought him off and nothing further happened.

43. The next day she reported to the headmaster at his house. She was given a cup of tea by his wife. He never turned up and she was sent away. The next day she was called to his office and he demanded she name the boy concerned. She was reluctant to name him as he was a popular boy from the school rugby team. She was informed by the headmaster that if she would not name the boy she would be excluded from the school for two weeks. She borrowed some money from a friend and ran away from the school. It was only to be for a short time but she never returned.
44. One incident in particular was alleged to have occurred within Bruce House where it was claimed there was a rape den in the undercroft. It was alleged there were ring bolts fastened to the walls. Some of the boys taken there were thirteen or fourteen years old. I believe one boy may have been reported to the police and that Malcolm Jones, from the child abuse unit at the police, was aware.
45. There were incidents at the swimming pool involving an assistant house master. One of the victims had approached me and made me aware of the circumstances. He alleged the assistant house master entered the pool naked and rubbed his erect penis against the pupils. This has been proven in court with a teacher, Andrew Keir, convicted.

Reporting of abuse of others

46. As a result of the allegations made against the school I contacted the headmaster through his secretary. She said he would return my call but never did. Following reminders he eventually called back and asked if the incidents were actually something to do with the school. I made him aware he had obligations to report the matters to the governor's. he was told that by not informing the governors he risked being sacked as headmaster. I also informed him I expected a letter in writing that the governors were now aware. I thought he was taking me seriously but again he sent me away. I could not let this be ignored and contacted one of the governor's direct and made him aware. Through this influence the school began to take notice.

47. There were other discussions regarding serious bullying and beatings. At this time it was the same housemaster but a different headmaster, Michael Mavor. He allegedly did not support housemasters during his tenure, there were many unpleasant incidents during his time that I was made aware of on G2
48. I met with Tom Perry, founder of Mandate Now, and a former headmaster who was a former child protection inspector in England. He had a greater knowledge of the procedures than I did and offered to meet with myself and senior staff at Gordonstoun. He gave them informal advice to improve things.
49. Tom Perry and I met the new headmaster, Simon Reid, the chairman of the governors of Gordonstoun, Professor Eve Poole one of the governor's and a member of staff, Sabine Richards. During those discussions the headmaster stated things were so different now that it did not affect the current school. I told them I wanted things dealt with properly. Improvements had to be made with their child protection policies. I pointed out to them that staff were not encouraged to report anything externally of the school and that whistle blowers risked being excluded. This approach had to change. The policy should be put in place for staff, as part of their contracts, to report things externally and if things were not reported then this would lead to staff being sacked. To date I have not seen the new contracts to verify whether this policy is in place, though I am assured it is.
50. At another meeting with the headmaster along with Richard Marsham (Governor) and Sabine Richards (Public Relations) at Gordonstoun. All the attendees seemed to be from the PR Department at Gordonstoun and little to do with child care. John Mulligan, Gordonstoun Committee member, was also present. He was at the meeting as G2 wished to set up a charitable foundation for persons who had been adversely affected by being at Gordonstoun. We suggested that alumni contributions along with contributions from the school would fund the charity. They did not see how it would work. One of the difficulties I saw was they wanted control of the charity fund and I believe it should run independently from the school. John Mulligan was the most resistant of the group and just wanted the situation to go away. The other

members of this group were of a similar thought. When I graphically illustrated some of the incidents it did get their attention, but to date nothing has been put in place.

Impact

51. I remain very defensive. I may suffer from a form of PTSD from my time at Gordonstoun and impacts my relationships. I do not react well to criticism and though I am not a very good team player I am self-reliant. Gordonstoun did not set people up for what life required.
52. I have a good group of friends. I understand myself better now than I did as a younger man. Gordonstoun made me self-reliant but distrusting of authority.

Hopes for the Inquiry

53. I would like the Inquiry to endorse Mandate Now and the mandatory reporting of suspicions of child abuse in regulated settings. Failure to report needs to be a criminal offence. I would hope that corroboration laws in Scotland be re-examined especially with regard to sexual offences.
54. Independent oversight of schools is required but it seems the schools are reluctant. Gordonstoun has a psychologist to assist people reporting incidents but at this time she still has to report to the headmaster. It needs to be independent. The headmaster is under the impression that nothing like this is happening today. We pointed out that we suspected since there are no changes in the law therefore abuse is still occurring within all schools.
55. The insurers of Gordonstoun have a great influence over the procedures there and how legal matters are dealt with. This influence should be prohibited in law. They are influencing things for their own business benefit.

56. Changes need to be made by Gordonstoun, but they are still reluctant or certainly very slow.

Other information

57. I have not sought any support for myself in relation to any of this. I find this involvement with the Inquiry cathartic. As much as I have not sought compensation previously it does not mean I will not do so in the future.
58. I have no objection to my witness statement being published anonymously as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..... 

Dated..... *20th March 2018*