

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

QPF [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is QPF [REDACTED] My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1946. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going to Gordonstoun

2. I was born in Keith and was the youngest of three children. I had two older sisters, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was ten years older than me. [REDACTED] was seven years older. My father, [REDACTED] was the [REDACTED] in Keith. My mother's name was [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
3. I went to the Green School in Fife Keith after this I moved on to the older age group primary school. I managed to fail my eleven plus, which meant I could only do one language plus technology at secondary school. My father had wanted me to do two languages. I was lazy. I could do the work if I was bribed. I also didn't know at that time but I was dyslexic. I didn't find out until I was in my forties that I was mildly dyslexic.
4. After failing my eleven plus I was taught at home for a year. This was my father's decision. After this I went to Blairmore prep school for a year and a bit.
5. I was about fourteen when I went to Gordonstoun School. I had heard about it before I went and it had a sort of mystique around it. I had heard that it was into fitness and you had two cold showers a day. It didn't have a reputation for bullying.

6. Before I started at Gordonstoun I had to go for an interview with the headmaster, Mr Chew. My father drove me there but I had to go for the interview on my own. Even at that time I thought Mr Chew was a foreboding and unpleasant individual. He faced the window the whole time I was there and fired questions at me. This made me feel quite inadequate.
7. I fumbled my way through the interview and was accepted. I don't know how my father afforded the fees on a [REDACTED]'s wage. The fees were means tested. Maybe my father had some family money he used. I really don't know.
8. I was a day pupil when I first went to Gordonstoun. My father arranged for me to stay with a Mr and Mrs H Napier at Duffus village. I think the school organised this. They were a nice family and I didn't mind staying there.
9. My school uniform for going to Gordonstoun had been bought somewhere in Edinburgh. There was a day and evening uniform. There was also an option to have a kilt.

Gordonstoun School, Elgin

General

10. I arrived at Gordonstoun at the start of the [REDACTED] term. There was three terms in all, Spring, Summer and Autumn. Gordonstoun was a large estate. There was a lodge at the east and west entrances. I think it would have been about three kilometres between both lodges.
11. The main building was where you went for classes. It also had a large dining room. There were a number of other buildings within the grounds that were used for education.

12. I was put into Duffus House. Duffus House was one of the seven houses that formed part of Gordonstoun. You stayed with the same house for the length of time you were there.
13. Duffus had about six or seven dormitories. I would stay in one of these when I was a boarder in my last year. There were around sixty boys in Duffus.
14. Duffus House was the second furthest away from the school. Hopeman Lodge was the furthest away. I think it was about three miles from the school. Duffus was about a mile from the school. When you went to the school from Duffus you either walked or took a bike.
15. There was a structure to the boys at the school. At the top was the head boy. He was referred to as the Guardian. Then it was house helpers, colour bearers and half colour bearers. These positions were all chosen by their peers.
16. When you first arrived you weren't allowed to wear your evening uniform until after you had been at the school a certain time.

Routine at Gordonstoun

First day

17. DGP [REDACTED] was the housemaster for Duffus. The assistant housemaster was Harry Potts. He was an Australian. They were both nice and I never had any problems with them. I don't remember being shown around or told anything about the routine. I am assuming I was and they explained the routine but I can't be certain.
18. There was a very regimented daily procedure for all pupils. I think there was something that had happened a few years previously when a pupil had died. He had been out on a sand dune in a tunnel when it collapsed. I assume that this was why the check in was in place. Things were much more stringent.

Mornings

19. As a day pupil I arrived after breakfast and went straight to classes.

Mealtimes

20. Duffus was the only house with its own kitchen and dining area. The meals were good at Gordonstoun. I would say they were about thirty years ahead of their time in terms of the food that was provided to you. There was margarine, not butter. This was a health choice. There were also things like muesli and whole grain bread.
21. It was quite secular at Duffus. There wasn't the opportunity to mix with the other houses as we had our meals together at Duffus. The other boys from different houses ate together in the main house. the boys would all sit in their own house groups within the refectory.

Recreational time

22. It was mandatory that you joined one of the services within Gordonstoun. These were either one of the armed forces. After this you could join the lifeboat, mountain rescue or scouts. I was a wimp so I chose the scouts. I did manage to become a Queen's scout.
23. Sport was a big part of Gordonstoun. Rugby was the main thing up until the Christmas break. After this it was hockey. Then in the Spring and Summer it was athletics. I preferred hockey.
24. Everyone had a training plan. This laid out what was expected of you every day. There was a morning run but I missed this as a day pupil. The training plan also detailed how many press ups and skips you had to do each day. There was another bit that said you couldn't eat anything between meals.

25. There wasn't much spare time to do your own thing other than school activities. If I did have some spare time on a Saturday afternoon I might occasionally take a bus into Elgin.
26. I used to arrange football matches between boys from the school and local village teams. This was frowned upon as rugby was the main sport at Gordonstoun. Prince Charles even played in one of the games. Prince Charles stayed in one of other houses in the grounds.

Schooling

27. I didn't feel out of place in the class when I arrived. It was the same as a secondary school with different teachers for each subject.
28. In the morning you had normal classes in the classroom. In the afternoon you would play sport. There were then evening classes between four and six. After the evening classes you would go for dinner. Once you had your dinner you would do prep.
29. I think I became even lazier at Gordonstoun. As you got older there was more free time. You were expected to go the library during this free time and study there. I would just go there and read magazines such as 'Time'. I never swotted for anything in my life.
30. There were classes on a Saturday morning. On a Saturday afternoon there was inter school sports. This would mainly be the upper echelons who would play.
31. If you weren't doing well with school work then there was no encouragement from the teachers to do better.
32. Learning French or Latin was beyond me. I was able to pick up science and maths without any problem.
33. Most of the teachers were English from universities such as Oxbridge. I remember there was a good maths teacher called Mrs Petrie. Mrs Petrie was from Aberdeen

University. My history teacher was also good. The teacher who saved me academically was the biology teacher Mr Richter. He had escaped from the Nazi's before the purge of the Jews. He was interred at Canada during the war.

34. I passed most of my O levels. I failed my English language O level and I was told I would have to stay back a year. My father kicked up hell about this and I was eventually allowed to move on to the next year.

Work

35. Gordonstoun found me a summer job as a River Watcher at Thurso. I was paid for doing this work.

Religious instruction

36. There was a small church in the grounds. This would hold services for individual houses every seven weeks. There was no restrictions on who could go.
37. I knew one of the boys who was Jewish. His faith was accommodated on a Friday.
38. On a Sunday evening we would all go to the church service at the services centre within the grounds. It was just a big hall. You didn't have a choice and you had to go.

Inspections

39. I don't remember any inspections at the school. There might have been but I don't have any knowledge of these.

Teacher meetings/parents meetings

40. I had no engagement with the housemaster regarding counselling or reviewing how I was doing at the school.

41. There were no parent and teacher meetings at Gordonstoun. It wasn't practical due to where a lot of the parents lived. There was reports sent out to your parents.

Discipline

42. There was only very occasional use of corporal punishment at Gordonstoun. I never received this punishment. You was an emphasis to install self instil discipline by following your daily training plan.
43. One of the few times I was aware of someone receiving corporal punishment was when two students were disciplined. I don't have first-hand knowledge of whsat had happened. I think I heard about them being disciplined when it became common knowledge around the school.
44. An older student, from Round Square, had a crush on a younger pupil. Round Square was one of the other houses in the grounds of Gordonstoun. The younger boy worked in the quartermaster's store as he was attached to the navy. The older boy locked the other boy in the store and made a sexual advance on him. The boy managed to get out the room and reported it to the staff.
45. I heard that the perpetrator's father was called into the school. Mr Chew told the father that if he beat his son with the cane then he might be allowed to stay. After the father had caned his son Chew said that the school didn't tolerate the sort of behaviour that his son had been involved in. The pupil was then told to leave the school. As I have said this was the talk around the school but I didn't see anything first hand.
46. When I did hear about the punishment for the student I found it totally abhorrent. I thought that there was no sense of justice in what happened.

Boarding

47. In my last year at Gordonstoun I was a boarder. My father made this decision. I think it was to try and make sure that I got decent A levels.

48. I stayed in a dormitory within Duffus. The dormitory had between six to eight boys in it. It was all boys around the same age as myself. I think that each dormitory had boys of roughly the same age. There might have been about a year of a difference but not anymore.
49. I would say there was more constraint as a boarder. I remember it always being very cold at night due to all the windows being open.
50. By the time I moved in as a boarder I was a lot fitter. I was now a senior pupil but I never got to the top of the 'greasy pole' as a senior prefect.
51. There was a house helper who had his own room at Duffus although the prefects had responsibility for the dormitories.
52. As a boarder I had to do the morning runs. We ran about four or five hundred metres in all weathers. The only time we didn't do it was if it was blowing a blizzard.

Abuse at Gordonstoun

██████████

53. I always thought of bullying as part of the scene at that time. The one person who bullied me and I held a grudge against was ██████████ His nickname was ██████████ ██████████ was one of the seniors in my house and thought of himself as the house hard man. I think that he was about three years ahead of me.
54. After sport you always had to have a shower. It would be a warm shower then a cold shower. When I came out the shower I would be flicked with a wet towel by ██████████ ██████████ It didn't leave a mark or bruise on me but I didn't like it. This happened numerous times to me. His friend would also do the same thing to me. I can't remember his friend's name. This bullying started not long after I had arrived at Gordonstoun.

55. I think the same thing with the wet towel would have happened to other pupils. I honestly cannot remember.
56. As a senior [REDACTED] would also serve the food at mealtimes. On one occasion when I went for my food he denied me having dessert. He said I wasn't getting any as I was too fat.
57. [REDACTED] came back to the school as an adult whilst I was still there. He gave us a lecture in the classroom. He would have recognised me. I thought he would have said sorry but he didn't.
- [REDACTED]
58. [REDACTED] also bullied me. one of them was called [REDACTED]. I don't know the name of the other one. They were around the same age as me. When I was in the showers they would come behind me with their hockey sticks and pull it back through my legs hitting my testicles. This happened more than once. It was nowhere near as bad as the bullying I received from [REDACTED]

Reporting of abuse at Gordonstoun

59. I have told my partner and sister about the bullying which I received at the school.

Leaving Gordonstoun

60. You could sit external exams at the end of each year. When you were old enough you could sit certain A level exams for specific universities. These weren't for specific exams for entrance to the university. It was just extra if you needed to sit these.
61. I had a place at Aberdeen University to study medicine. This had been as a result of DGP [REDACTED]'s contacts. I couldn't take it up as I didn't pass French. I always struggled with this as a language.

Life after Gordonstoun

62. I secured a place at Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen to study pharmacy. After about a year I moved to Lancaster University and studied biological sciences. I managed to get my degree in this subject.
63. The family home was still in Keith. I would still go back there. I did a few different jobs when I was back in Keith.
64. In the mid-sixties my sisters moved to New Zealand. Not long after this my father retired and also moved there. Eventually I joined them there and I started to get into teaching.
65. I taught chemistry and biology at the same school for thirty years before retiring in 2000. I did a bit of relief IT teaching.
66. In 1992 I had an exchange with a teacher from Kilmarnock. Whilst I was there I went back to Gordonstoun. I enquired at Duffus House enquired about DGP I was given short thrift. The staff weren't rude but they weren't particularly helpful towards an ex pupil.
67. I had another visit to Gordonstoun in 2018. The staff member I spoke to was very pleasant, more helpful than my last visit. I was able to walk right through the grounds from one side to the other.
68. I did join the Gordonstoun Association. I just wanted to see what my old school cohorts were up to now.
69. About four years ago a female from the Gordonstoun Association telephoned me. She kept on calling me sir, which I asked her not to. I eventually hung up on her. I think she was looking for a financial donation from me. A few days later I received an email from

the association saying how rude I had been on the phone. Since this email I have never heard anything more from them.

- 70. I have never kept in touch with anyone from my time at Gordonstoun. I haven't been to any reunions.
- 71. I have never been married but I have been with the same partner for the last forty years. I have three step children.

Lessons to be learned

- 72. In my opinion going to Gordonstoun was a complete waste of time for me. It didn't have the desired effect on me in terms of my education. It might have made me a bit more self-reliant.
- 73. As a fee paying school the education standards should have been much higher. As a parent I would have been appalled at how bad the education provided was.
- 74. I think that there should have been more oversight by the staff. The pupils were more or less left to get on with it. You weren't really encouraged by the staff to do well.
- 75. There should be more inspections of boarding school. I think that bullying still goes on. I don't think Gordonstoun was worse than any other school. I would like changes to be made so that there wasn't this opportunity for bullying to take place.
- 76. There should something in place to report incidents. It might be that this is now in place for this to happen.

Records

- 77. I have never tried to obtain any of my records from time at Gordonstoun. I don't know if they even exist.

78. 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. QPF.....

Dated. 15/03/20.....