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Wednesday, 13 October 2021

(10.00 am)

LADY SMITH: Good morning. We return this morning to some more Gordonstoun evidence with a live witness who I think is ready and waiting for us. Is that right, Mr Brown?

MR BROWN: She is, my Lady. The next witness is 'Jane'.

LADY SMITH: Thank you.

'Jane' (sworn)

LADY SMITH: In the red folder in front of you you'll find your statement that you'll be able to use if you would find it helpful to use the hard copy, but it will also come up on screen at the parts that you're being referred to when we need you to look at it, so use either, whatever you're comfortable with.

Can I also just assure you, 'Jane', that if you want any breaks, if you have any queries, anything else arises that makes you feel that you're not comfortable enough, please let me know. What matters most to me is that you're able to give your evidence in whatever way works for you. If it works for you, it works for me. All right?

A. Thank you.

LADY SMITH: If you're ready, I'll hand over to Mr Brown and we'll take it from there and he'll explain to you what

1 happens next. Is that okay?

2 A. Thank you, yes.

3 LADY SMITH: Mr Brown -- oh, one other thing, 'Jane'. I do
4 need you to speak in a way that that microphone picks
5 you up. It's not just for me to hear and everybody in
6 the room to hear, but the stenographers listen to you
7 through the sound system, they don't listen through the
8 open air, if I can put it that way, so it's really
9 important that the mic gets you.

10 Mr Brown.

11 Questions from Mr Brown

12 MR BROWN: Thank you.

13 'Jane', good morning. I saw you moving the
14 microphone a little closer. If you could just pull it
15 towards you just to make sure that we hear because
16 obviously that's the most important thing, to hear you,
17 because that's why you're here, to tell us about your
18 experience.

19 A. Thank you.

20 Q. You have, as her Ladyship said, your statement in front
21 of you, you'll see it on screen, you have it in the
22 folder. Can we just start by looking at that
23 document -- first of all, forgive me. My copy has
24 a reference number so for the record I have to read the
25 reference number in and that is WIT.001.0017327.

1 Formality over. Could we go to the last page of
2 your statement, please, that's page 33. Do you have
3 that?
4 A. (Witness nods).
5 Q. You'll see obviously that you signed the statement on
6 14 December --
7 A. Yes.
8 Q. -- in 2017, so almost four years ago.
9 A. Yes.
10 Q. The last paragraph in the numbered, 146, says:
11 "I have no objection to my witness statement being
12 published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry.
13 I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are
14 true."
15 And we understand, obviously, that you were sent
16 drafts?
17 A. Yes.
18 Q. You considered them, they were revised and then finally
19 this version you were content with?
20 A. Yes.
21 Q. And signed that?
22 A. Yes. I did.
23 Q. Okay. As I think you will understand, your statement is
24 in evidence so we don't need to rehearse everything
25 about it.

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Obviously you and I know that it talks about specific
3 episodes.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Which the Inquiry, you can take it, understands and will
6 have read.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. What I think we would both probably benefit from today
9 is talking more generally, is that fair?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. About Aberlour?

12 A. Uh-huh.

13 Q. And Gordonstoun and the ethos --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- as you would understand it and your concerns about
16 that.

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Is that correct?

19 A. Yes, it is.

20 Q. All right. Obviously we have to sort of set the scene.
21 You are, I think, now 53?

22 A. Uh-huh.

23 Q. And younger than me, take heart.

24 LADY SMITH: Let me join that, 'Jane'. It seems a long time
25 ago I was 53. Think of yourself as young.

1 MR BROWN: You went to Aberlour 79 --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- to 81 and then on to Gordonstoun for five years --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. -- from Aberlour?

6 A. Uh-huh.

7 Q. But home was in the Central Belt?

8 A. Uh-huh.

9 Q. And prior to going to Aberlour, had your schooling just

10 been mainstream day school?

11 A. Yeah, I went to Morningside primary school.

12 Q. Morningside primary, okay.

13 A. Uh-huh.

14 Q. I think as you say, and again I don't need to go into

15 the detail of it because your statement is explicit

16 about it, at paragraph 134 on page 30 you say:

17 "My home life wasn't great. My experiences at home

18 would have impacted upon my time at school and made me

19 vulnerable."

20 And I think you would agree, obviously, it's your

21 words?

22 A. Absolutely.

23 Q. When you went to Aberlour, was that something that was

24 chosen by your parents for you or did you have any input

25 into the move?

1 A. I did not have any input. I did not. But I think my
2 mother very much wanted to improve the situation for us
3 and in Edinburgh, the difference between state and
4 private schooling is very marked.

5 Q. Yes. I think to add to the complexity, your father was
6 working abroad, which presumably --

7 A. Uh-huh, yeah, and all of that meant that there was funds
8 finally to be able to get what she wanted.

9 Q. I think, as you set out on page 3, paragraph 13, you
10 hadn't visited the school before you started there?

11 A. No.

12 Q. "We had no involvement in the process and the decision.
13 My mother had attended an interview with the
14 headmaster..."

15 A. Uh-huh.

16 Q. And, as you say, she was excited about being the
17 prospect of a fellow parent of the Queen's?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. That sort of level of excitement existed in her head if
20 not yours?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. In particular, as you say, your mother had explained to
23 the headmaster that not just you but your siblings were
24 shy and that he said, "That won't last long". Was he
25 right about that or did you remain shy?

1 A. I -- I -- it did not last long. The only way to survive
2 would be to be entertaining.

3 Q. Right. Was that, being entertaining, a mask?

4 A. Absolutely. Absolutely. I -- I -- I really -- I really
5 struggled to know how to -- to fit in.

6 Q. Okay. Going to Aberlour, I think you said, we don't
7 need to look at it, that perhaps like many children of
8 your generation, you'd read Mallory Towers by
9 Enid Blyton, the idea of going to a boarding school was,
10 is it fair to say, an exciting prospect before you got
11 there?

12 A. Although it was completely different from what I found.

13 Q. Absolutely, but my point is before you went, presumably
14 because of Enid Blyton, and you --

15 A. I think my mother was much more excited than I was.

16 Q. Uh-huh. Perhaps we can agree on this: you had no idea
17 what you were going to find?

18 A. No, absolutely none.

19 LADY SMITH: Your mother was much more sussed than you were.
20 She knew what to expect, is that what you mean?

21 A. I think she'd been through the establishment herself
22 and, yeah, I think it's -- I thought there would be
23 a lot of midnight feasts. I will admit that.

24 MR BROWN: Yes. But it wasn't like that?

25 A. No, it really wasn't.

1 Q. Do you remember how you felt when you first went there?
2 We've seen pictures of the school, obviously. It's
3 an imposing stately home.
4 A. Uh-huh.
5 Q. In beautiful countryside, I think we could agree?
6 A. Yeah.
7 Q. But once you went in --
8 A. I think, like a lot of those establishments, the
9 outside, it's a lie, because what's -- the state of the
10 interior is, oh, at a completely different level. It
11 was really quite squalid, particularly for the boys.
12 Q. I think you say the girls' accommodation was rather
13 better?
14 A. Yeah, and I -- you know, the boys would kind of clean
15 themselves in the sinks.
16 Q. What we've heard already, both for Aberlour and
17 Gordonstoun, is "spartan". Does that ring true with you
18 or was it more than that?
19 A. Well, "spartan" sounds quite clean. That -- I don't --
20 I don't really -- particularly for the boys, I just
21 don't -- the damp and just -- just the experience,
22 particularly in the shower rooms was -- did not feel
23 spartan but decrepit.
24 Q. And thinking of Aberlour as opposed to Gordonstoun, did
25 you get the sense that things were done, if they weren't

1 particularly clean or squalid, and you're saying, that
2 things were being done perhaps without a great deal of
3 funds?

4 A. Whether there was enough money to --

5 Q. Yes.

6 A. I think -- I think the quality of the food we were
7 having was quite a good indication about how much money
8 that there was.

9 Q. Go on.

10 A. Well, just to empty a can of tomatoes and heat that up
11 for an evening meal and -- yeah, and that -- I don't
12 know why the headteacher's wife was doing quite a lot of
13 the cooking and I don't know whether that was because
14 she was -- because of funds or whether she wasn't able
15 to have a good working relationship with those who'd
16 come to do that. But I think there was few children,
17 like 100, 120, less than that, and yeah, I think
18 probably funds were quite tight.

19 Q. All right. You mention the food. I think one of the
20 things that you mention in your statement at
21 paragraph 29 is that you had to finish your food --

22 A. Yes, always.

23 Q. And if you didn't, you would be punished?

24 A. Absolutely.

25 Q. A number of questions from that. Was that the way it

1 worked through the entire time you were at Aberlour?

2 A. Absolutely.

3 Q. And in terms of punishment, what would be the punishment

4 if you didn't? Can you remember?

5 A. Punishments tended to be standing outside in the hall,

6 but my friend who would not finish, she had to remain

7 there the whole rest of the day until she had finished,

8 and I think was given a much larger portion on which to

9 struggle with.

10 Q. So was it essentially a battle of wills?

11 A. Yeah. She lost.

12 Q. And she lost?

13 A. Uh-huh.

14 Q. Being sent out to stand in the hall, is this the hall

15 with a clock?

16 A. Yes, and it's within shouting distance of the

17 headteacher's office, so he would be able to -- and the

18 staffroom as well, so it was just a way of being able to

19 easily monitor.

20 Q. Yes. And how long would people be sent to stand in the

21 hall for?

22 A. I'm really sorry, I don't know the answer to that

23 because I would never allow myself to be punished.

24 Q. No, but did you see other children standing in the hall?

25 A. Yeah, for some time.

1 Q. The point I make is that people are standing in the
2 hall, the rest of the school would be passing by --
3 A. Yes, absolutely.
4 Q. -- and they would be visible?
5 A. Uh-huh.
6 Q. When you first arrived, I think you tell us that the
7 plan, at least, was that every new pupil would have
8 a mentor, but as you say, in your case that didn't work
9 out --
10 A. No.
11 Q. -- because your mentor wasn't able to be there.
12 A. No.
13 Q. The plan sounds perhaps sensible.
14 A. Uh-huh.
15 Q. But when it went wrong, there was no flexibility?
16 A. No.
17 Q. So were you just left to your own devices?
18 A. Yeah, but I -- I suppose -- you know, we were so young,
19 11, and my mentor would have been 11. I'm not sure how
20 much -- I'm not sure, for those who experienced that,
21 how much that 11-year-old was able to assist or direct
22 or -- but I guess understanding how the -- how the
23 culture worked, it might have been more helpful to have
24 had somebody able to answer questions, but I don't even
25 know if I was confident enough to ask questions. Maybe

1 that was part of the problem for me.

2 Q. But we can take it you would go into a dormitory with

3 other girls?

4 A. Uh-huh.

5 Q. And did the lack of having a mentor in due course pass

6 because you would simply pick up what you were expected

7 to do?

8 A. Yes, yes.

9 Q. In terms of the other girls you were with, was that

10 a proper friendship group that you built up or was it

11 just ...

12 A. Yeah, at the time, yes, yes. I mean, I do think that

13 a lot of us were very vulnerable and still wetting the

14 bed, even at quite -- at the same age, 11, so I think it

15 was -- there wasn't bullying or anything like that.

16 Q. There wasn't --

17 A. I think we really reached out for one another.

18 Q. And I think you say that the matron --

19 A. She was lovely.

20 Q. She was lovely?

21 A. Uh-huh.

22 Q. And she would deal with bed-wetting?

23 A. Yes, she would.

24 Q. Although, as you say, there was a lot of shame.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Presumably for the individual?

2 A. Yeah, she would do it when no one was aware.

3 Q. All right. But as between the girls in the dorm, would

4 there be more sympathy rather than mocking?

5 A. I don't think anyone would have dared even speak about

6 it. Though you could smell it, you'd never dream of

7 speaking about it.

8 Q. In terms of the teaching staff, you obviously talk about

9 some of the teaching staff positively.

10 A. Uh-huh.

11 Q. And I think in particular you mention the science

12 master --

13 A. Uh-huh.

14 Q. -- who was a very nice man and he, as you say in

15 paragraph 37 on page 9:

16 "He would be on duty on Saturday afternoons. He

17 would organise strange things for us to do to kill the

18 time. On one occasion we had to do a three-legged race,

19 blindfolded, over three miles. It was such a relief not

20 to have too much free time to reflect upon how horrible

21 it all was."

22 A. He was brilliant.

23 Q. He was brilliant; was he reflective of the staff as

24 a whole?

25 A. I think in that culture, it created a space for him to

1 be incredibly creative and energetic, and thoughtful.

2 Q. Yes.

3 A. But I think the culture was -- meant that -- there was

4 particularly one other teacher who just disappeared

5 after a couple of terms and I know that was because he

6 was grooming, so it had these positive opportunities,

7 the teaching -- the lack of kind of boundaries, that

8 created opportunities for someone like Mr Hanson, but it

9 also meant there were opportunities for other kinds of

10 people.

11 Q. Yes. Because the word I was going to come back to about

12 the part of the statement I read, paragraph 37, the

13 fourth-last, is because you say it was "horrible".

14 A. (Witness nods).

15 Q. Clearly there were some aspects, a good teacher, there

16 was some camaraderie, there wasn't bullying, but still

17 you describe it as horrible. Is it because of the lack

18 of boundaries you just touched upon?

19 A. Yes, yes. I didn't feel safe at all.

20 Q. You didn't feel safe. Did you ever feel safe at

21 Aberlour?

22 A. No.

23 Q. You mentioned, obviously, the lack of boundaries allowed

24 Mr Hanson to do the good bits, but you were aware, you

25 were saying, about another teacher who lasted a couple

1 of terms and then disappeared and that, you understand,
2 was because of grooming.

3 A. Uh-huh.

4 Q. Is that something that you were aware of at the time?

5 A. No, no.

6 Q. Are these things you've read in the newspapers and books
7 since, online?

8 A. Well, I was obviously -- in my diary, this gentleman
9 does come up because he's straying around the bedrooms
10 when we're trying to get undressed and it's very clear
11 from when the bell goes when people are going to be
12 naked or getting undressed and that he would be present
13 during those periods.

14 Q. Thank you for reminding me of that because obviously
15 this statement, as I said, is almost four years old.

16 A. Uh-huh.

17 Q. Is it fair to say that, with appearing today, you've had
18 your diaries, obviously, throughout your life and you've
19 been reminding yourself?

20 A. Yeah, I didn't look through them for giving the
21 statement because I just couldn't face it, but I felt it
22 would be wise to corroborate myself.

23 Q. Sure.

24 A. And I -- I'm anxious that I -- I would really want to be
25 telling the truth.

1 Q. Indeed.

2 LADY SMITH: 'Jane', tell me about the diaries. Were these

3 diaries you were keeping when you were at school?

4 A. Yes. So I've gone through them in preparation for

5 today.

6 LADY SMITH: You've?

7 A. Gone through them in preparation for today.

8 LADY SMITH: Thank you. And were they diaries you were

9 keeping at the time we're talking about, when you were

10 at Aberlour?

11 A. Uh-huh.

12 LADY SMITH: Did you carry on keeping them later when you

13 went to Gordonstoun?

14 A. Yeah, they're all the way through. I've left quite

15 a few at home.

16 LADY SMITH: That's all right.

17 A. But these were ones that felt useful.

18 MR BROWN: Yes.

19 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

20 A. Thank you.

21 LADY SMITH: Mr Brown.

22 MR BROWN: Yes. You're obviously an assiduous diary writer.

23 You kept it going?

24 A. But I do -- clearly I'm lying, you know, in a sense that

25 I don't feel it's safe. You know, my tone is very

1 strange to me.

2 Q. Yes.

3 A. And I think it's because I wouldn't have felt even safe
4 about what I was writing down. But those sorts of
5 things were, "This teacher is straying around", I just
6 noted that he's there, but I wouldn't have gone into why
7 I've noted it.

8 Q. No. It may seem self-evident: why wouldn't you write in
9 full detail?

10 A. Because it didn't feel safe. I felt that all of our
11 stuff was available.

12 Q. Was that a feeling at Aberlour and Gordonstoun?

13 A. Yeah, I think -- I think so, I think so, although
14 I don't feel that the teachers had the capacity to be to
15 intrusive at Gordonstoun, but I do think the other
16 children.

17 Q. All right, so a change in dynamic?

18 A. Uh-huh.

19 Q. The anxiety at Aberlour was perhaps the teachers might
20 find it; in Gordonstoun, your fellow pupils might go
21 through your stuff?

22 A. Yes, uh-huh.

23 Q. Just to go back to what you've talked about in the
24 diary, you make mention of a specific teacher coming
25 around when children were undressing. This is the

1 teacher, to be clear, who left after two terms?

2 A. Uh-huh.

3 Q. Do you remember who that was?

4 A. He was the [REDACTED] teacher.

5 Q. He was the [REDACTED] teacher. And is this the same

6 [REDACTED] teacher that you then read about in newspaper

7 articles later --

8 A. No. No, that's -- it's just a repeat. It's just

9 shocking. Completely shocking that that would have been

10 repeated.

11 Q. Forgive me, it's my fault. You weren't noting about

12 an [REDACTED] teacher doing these things in your diary?

13 A. I've just been aware that -- of the only person that

14 I kind of noted down is there when I'm undressing is

15 him.

16 Q. Yes.

17 A. But I know that the person he was grooming was a boy.

18 Q. Absolutely.

19 A. At the time. But I think he's completely separate from

20 when I've -- incident than I've been reading in the

21 papers.

22 Q. I see, okay. You understand, or you understood that the

23 grooming was of a boy?

24 A. Uh-huh.

25 Q. But what you can say from what you saw is that the same

1 teacher, [REDACTED] teacher, would appear in the girls'
2 dorms?

3 A. Uh-huh.

4 Q. Did anyone else do that?

5 A. Another -- another teacher would and I know that other
6 girls were uncomfortable with it, would come and tuck us
7 in. But I -- I was -- I found it quite nice.

8 Q. All right. But again, my fault, just so that we
9 understand, did this teacher stand out as different from
10 the other teachers because he would come round when you
11 were getting undressed? Was he the only one who did
12 that?

13 A. The one -- the one who went missing? Just disappeared?

14 Q. Yes.

15 A. Yes. It just seems strange that I'm tracking him
16 throughout this diary.

17 Q. You obviously felt that this was of sufficient moment to
18 record?

19 A. Yes, and it's strange because it's not something
20 I clearly was doing often -- I mean, that's not why
21 I was writing.

22 Q. Yes. Did you or your classmates feel able to say
23 anything about that? To express your concern?

24 A. Absolutely not.

25 Q. Why not?

1 A. When the headteacher comes and helps with the birthday
2 baths --

3 Q. Yes.

4 A. -- it doesn't -- it doesn't -- we've lost the compass of
5 what's right and what's wrong. To be naked with our
6 teachers is not -- and it -- I just completely lost what
7 was okay and what wasn't.

8 Q. Is that another example of there being no boundaries?

9 A. Absolutely.

10 Q. Could we look, please, at a document which will appear
11 on the screen in front of you, and this is document
12 GOR-000004508. Just to explain, this is some of the
13 pages of your records that have been provided by
14 Gordonstoun, and that includes at page 6, if we could go
15 to that -- sorry, page 7, I do beg your pardon. This is
16 a copy from March 1980.

17 A. Oh my God.

18 Q. And you'll see as you look through it obviously there
19 are various comments but you're described as very
20 conscientious, having some difficulties, as making good
21 progress in science, as we read down, working well,
22 gaining good units, progress has been rather slower as
23 there is more to remember for Latin. And then the
24 headmaster's comment, the overall round-up:
25 "Has had an excellent term in many ways. She has

1 worked extremely hard and to good effect, making
2 splendid progress in all of her studies."
3 Then more generally, the final paragraph, about the
4 school:
5 " ... her quiet, rather reticent, self-effacing ways
6 occasionally mean that she is left out of things that
7 are going on, so I would like to see her try and develop
8 a more positive involved attitude, if possible, next
9 term."
10 But the tone, would you agree, is overall positive?
11 A. It is. I just love the fact that Mr CFP, the one
12 who disappeared, calls me "morose". But -- yes, I --
13 I kind of don't recognise that narrative, really.
14 Q. Is this coming back to the mask, perhaps?
15 A. Yes. But, you know, this sense of being left out
16 does -- I do recognise. But I -- I guess we were all
17 clients, or those parents were all clients. They're
18 going to get the right -- they're going to get the right
19 story.
20 Q. Was anything done, going back to the isolation that's
21 talked about, trying to be more involved, was anything
22 done to achieve that or were you just left to your own
23 devices?
24 A. It just continued as it had. So, no.
25 Q. Presumably from what you're saying, some teachers, like

1 Mr Hanson, would try and engage?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. But that was down to him rather than a school approach?

4 A. Uh-huh, absolutely.

5 Q. That was simply him?

6 A. Absolutely.

7 Q. All right.

8 LADY SMITH: At this stage you'd been at the school for,

9 what, two terms?

10 A. Yeah. Yes. But I never got taught by the headteacher.

11 He did teach some pupils but he never taught me.

12 MR BROWN: The approach, though, the ethos of the school, we

13 understand, just as with Gordonstoun, involved a great

14 deal of outdoor activity.

15 A. Uh-huh.

16 Q. And self-reliance, is that a --

17 A. Absolutely.

18 Q. Did you find that natural, easy to deal with?

19 A. No, and that continued all the way through Gordonstoun.

20 But just the sort of idea that, you know, one member of

21 staff taking us for quite a kind of rigorous two- to

22 three-night camping trip on their own, you know, as

23 a mother myself I'm just completely shocked.

24 Q. Yes.

25 A. Completely shocked. And just that we were cooking for

1 ourselves and -- yeah, it was -- it seemed really
2 quite -- quite a lot to be expecting of us aged 11.
3 Q. Obviously you've made the point that by today's
4 standards that's astonishing.
5 A. Yes.
6 Q. At the time it was hard, but was this something that
7 troubled you then? If you can remember.
8 A. I think I would have -- I would have been worried about
9 who was taking us.
10 Q. Another example, perhaps, of there being no boundaries?
11 A. Yes, absolutely.
12 Q. Because you were with a teacher --
13 A. Yes.
14 Q. -- far away?
15 A. And some would -- like, to be with Mr Hanson would feel
16 like somebody was in charge, and to perhaps be with
17 others wouldn't have felt safe really at all.
18 Q. So again it turns on the individual?
19 A. Absolutely.
20 Q. Do you remember, and if you can't answer this please
21 just say so, do you remember or have any sense of how
22 staff were employed by the school, the process by which
23 they arrived, departed?
24 A. I -- I don't know the answer, but I -- I would --
25 I never -- for instance, the gentleman who only lasted

1 two terms or three terms was -- it wasn't like they
2 arrived ahead of time and practised or introduced -- or
3 there was a number of candidates who were put in front
4 of us. That absolutely didn't happen.

5 Q. Was that something you saw later on in your school
6 career or --

7 A. No. I don't know why -- I'm just -- I'm just thinking
8 that would be normal course of events in any other kind
9 of place, but no, that didn't happen.

10 Q. Did you get a sense of appointment by connection, in
11 other words knowing people at the school already, for
12 example the headmaster?

13 A. I'm sure that would be how he -- he would prefer to --
14 I mean, there were men who would -- and they'd just
15 finished school, usually at another boarding school, and
16 would arrive to cover for a year and they'd be the sort
17 of person who came and helped on the expeditions and
18 came and did some rugby with us and came and did -- and
19 they would, I'm sure, be friends of friends.

20 Q. These are 18/19-year-olds?

21 A. Uh-huh, and they would be -- yeah, they would be just --
22 they would just arrive and spend a year with us. And
23 some were great. I mean, you know, they were enjoyable,
24 but I don't know how those happened or what kind of
25 boundaries they were given.

1 Q. Some were great. Others?

2 A. I was only there for two years so I only experienced --

3 the only one I remember, he was good.

4 Q. Okay, thank you. But obviously when you hit 13, you

5 progressed to Gordonstoun?

6 A. Uh-huh.

7 Q. I think we would understand that Aberlour was considered

8 practically the prep school, junior school, of

9 Gordonstoun. Is that how you would have felt at the

10 time?

11 A. Oh yeah, we were all going there.

12 Q. Was it just a given?

13 A. Oh yeah. Nobody was going anywhere else.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. Well, in my year for sure. It felt like -- it felt

16 like -- it felt like Gordonstoun needed us to have been

17 through that, because many of us were not passing our

18 Common Entrance, me particularly.

19 Q. Many of you were not?

20 A. Passing the Common Entrance examination.

21 Q. I see.

22 A. But if we'd been at Aberlour, that would be overlooked.

23 Q. So you didn't pass the Common Entrance?

24 A. No, of course I didn't.

25 Q. Why do you say of course you didn't?

1 A. I hid my head under the bed the entire time.

2 Q. Right. But having been to Aberlour, you were in, it
3 would appear from what you're saying, anyway?

4 A. Uh-huh.

5 Q. There was an interview as well, I think you tell us?

6 A. Yeah, there was, but it felt more -- it just felt like
7 that was a given, a kind of a way of introducing us to
8 the school much more than an interview.

9 Q. And at that time, from one of the things you say, did
10 you have the sense -- this is paragraph 61 on page 14 --
11 that they were having difficulty recruiting and would
12 take really anyone they could find?

13 A. Well, I -- later on, I was aware that a boy -- and
14 I think there were probably others -- who were expelled
15 elsewhere and this was a good recruitment strategy.

16 Q. All right.

17 A. Because I think Gordonstoun would -- if you were
18 expelled from there, it was quite difficult to get you
19 in anywhere else. That was kind of the last -- last
20 sort of ditch.

21 Q. That was the perception you had?

22 A. Oh, that was definitely the perception I had.

23 Q. Was that a common perception of your --

24 A. Well, I don't know how well -- how well we were being
25 educated, and those that managed to get into Oxbridge --

1 and there were so few -- really worked their guts out
2 and did it themselves.

3 Q. All right. But I think you say -- it's the final
4 sentence of that paragraph:

5 "In retrospect, there were quite a lot of damaged
6 children there, children who had been expelled or
7 parents who didn't mind what happened because there was
8 enough money."

9 A. Uh-huh.

10 Q. When you got to Gordonstoun, you'd been in Aberlour for
11 two years with the same, presumably, group of
12 classmates, friends. Did you see the dynamic of the
13 pupil body change when you got to Gordonstoun? Was it
14 a different sort of pupil or ...?

15 A. Well, their whole teaching body, I think that's where
16 the things changed. Whereas the head at Aberlour kind
17 of had a tight rein on everything and his lack of
18 boundaries were being reflected perhaps in others, but
19 he -- there were boundaries, whereas at Gordonstoun
20 there was one teacher who was quite stodgy and he had
21 a really stodgy dog and a Vauxhall Astra, and he would
22 walk his dog by staying in his Astra and this dog would
23 walk or gallop beside his driving car and that's how it
24 felt at Gordonstoun. All those teachers were staying in
25 their cars.

1 Q. All right.

2 A. And the impact on the rest of us, I think, was -- we
3 were feral and we weren't safe from one another.

4 Q. Let's develop that bit by bit. First things first.
5 You've come from a rather beautiful, at least on the
6 outside, stately home in the Highlands. You now come
7 onto the Moray plain and you move into a Nissen hut.
8 That was your house?

9 A. Uh-huh.

10 Q. Which house was that?

11 A. Windmill Lodge.

12 Q. Windmill Lodge. Obviously we know another difference is
13 the campus at Aberlour was contained in the main
14 building and the outbuildings where the classrooms were.
15 The campus at Gordonstoun, we understand, is very
16 extensive and can involve quite long walks from one
17 place to the other?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And whereas, I think, we know in Aberlour there were
20 flights to allow for competition between --

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. -- in sport for the like --

23 A. Uh-huh.

24 Q. -- there are very distinct houses at Gordonstoun.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. You've talked, obviously, a moment ago, about the
2 headmaster at Aberlour having some control but
3 Gordonstoun being very distinct. Again, just to cut
4 through it, we've heard that houses could be autonomous,
5 effectively.

6 A. Okay, yeah.

7 Q. Does that ring true from your experience?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Your life revolved, away from the educational side,
10 around the house?

11 A. Yes. And I -- there were two boys' Nissen huts across
12 the road and one of them was crazy, absolutely crazy.
13 The amount of weapons found in that house was just
14 insane. And it was down to the fact the housemaster was
15 a very relaxed individual.

16 LADY SMITH: What was the name of that house?

17 A. Altyre.

18 LADY SMITH: Thank you. Altyre.

19 MR BROWN: And the other boys' house next to it?

20 A. Bruce.

21 Q. Bruce. Again you've touched on something I would have
22 asked you but let's ask now. Did the houses -- and
23 there were a number of them -- all have their different
24 reputations that you as a pupil would understand?

25 A. Yeah, and that's partly why we chose which house we

1 would go into.

2 Q. There was an element of choice?

3 A. Well, yes. There were only two girls' houses and the

4 other house was a purpose-built girls' house, Hopeman

5 House, and -- yeah, I think people -- there were no

6 dormitories in Hopeman House, whereas windmill was very,

7 you know -- the sort of sense of it being spartan, there

8 were mice in the dormitories and I kind of felt that it

9 was going to be better for status to be going the hard

10 way. That's why I'd opted for it.

11 Q. I see.

12 LADY SMITH: When you say there were no dormitories in

13 Hopeman, what do you mean? There must be somewhere for

14 girls to sleep.

15 A. They had these separate little spaces with beds in them

16 and they could talk over a barrier between them.

17 LADY SMITH: That was the horsebox style, was it?

18 A. Yes, you're right. I'd forgotten what it was called.

19 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

20 MR BROWN: Did you transition from Aberlour to Windmill with

21 your friends from Aberlour? Did you stick together?

22 A. No, they just predominantly go to Hopeman because they

23 were saner.

24 Q. Sorry, they were ...?

25 A. Well, the idea of continuing with the spartan just

1 didn't wash with them, which now looking back I find
2 hilarious that I would have ...

3 Q. Chosen?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. All right.

6 A. But Mrs Cax(?), the housemistress, was good, and had
7 clear boundaries.

8 Q. I was coming onto that. Did the culture, and I think
9 you've alluded to this talking about Altyre, where the
10 housemaster was very relaxed, presumably the character
11 of the house head, master or mistress, as it would be in
12 those days, determined the ethos of the house?

13 A. Yes, and she was -- she was somebody who had clear
14 boundaries.

15 Q. And did you find that an improvement?

16 A. I -- yeah. Yes.

17 Q. Just focusing on your experience, and please correct me
18 if I'm wrong, broadly I think the impression one gets
19 from your statement is Gordonstoun, from your
20 perspective, was easier than Aberlour?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And is that reflective of her character and the fact
23 that there were boundaries set?

24 A. Yes, and I think house to house that would have been
25 very different. And I think for us girls, whatever was

1 happening to the boys would bleed out over us because we
2 were -- we were easy targets. But within the house,
3 I felt safe.

4 Q. Yes. I'll come onto the other aspect in a moment.

5 A. Okay.

6 Q. But you would understand, I think you've touched upon
7 this, that there were houses where presumably the idea
8 of being there would fill you with dread because --

9 A. Oh, absolutely.

10 Q. Particularly the boys' houses?

11 A. I just can't imagine how bad things must have been
12 there.

13 Q. I mean appreciating -- we don't need to go into the
14 detail because you've set it out in your statement, you
15 were in the girls' house, presumably you didn't see
16 things but you heard about them?

17 A. Well, I only heard about --

18 Q. At the boys' houses?

19 A. I only heard about the expulsions and they would have
20 been announced at chapel.

21 Q. Yes.

22 A. And I did the -- the boy who was shot six times was in
23 my class, so I did see his -- the marks on him.

24 Q. Right. Obviously there is interplay between houses on
25 the educational side and presumably in activities.

1 A. Uh-huh.

2 Q. Because we know at Gordonstoun there were a great many
3 activities and a great deal of expectation of being
4 outdoors, is that fair?

5 A. Yes, yes.

6 Q. But was there any sense of control by the school of the
7 houses? So, for example, you've talked about Altyre
8 being wild. Did you have any sense that Gordonstoun as
9 a school tried to do anything about that?

10 A. No.

11 Q. The houses were left to their own devices?

12 A. Yes. Yes.

13 Q. Were you aware of anyone complaining or raising concerns
14 about behaviours in different houses?

15 A. That was the cardinal sin, to speak. So no, there was
16 absolutely no way anyone would. So the only reason that
17 those incidents were available was because there was
18 evidence on the body which couldn't be ignored. But if
19 things were happening and they could be kept quiet, they
20 were always kept quiet.

21 Q. Obviously you've just said, for example, you saw the boy
22 who was shot and is this with an air weapon?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Which led to expulsions. That's a known quantity within
25 the school. Did that, for example, have any impact on

1 the house it took place in?

2 A. I don't -- I don't think so. But you were never

3 expelled -- you were only expelled for sex. For

4 shooting other people, just rustication.

5 Q. Rustication is being suspended?

6 A. (Witness nods).

7 Q. Yes. Again if we can look at the same document we were

8 touching on for Aberlour, can we go back to 4508 and

9 look, please, at page 3. This is a document written in

10 1986 and it confirms that you were there for five years

11 and you were described as emerging as a strong

12 personality with firmly held opinions, having suppressed

13 an early inclination to fade into the background. And

14 "she enjoyed her studies and it showed", and then it

15 talks about the various achievements and concludes in

16 that paragraph that you were a useful contributor to

17 discussion groups on a variety of subjects and for two

18 years had a place on the school council. And then:

19 "Although I don't think she saw herself as

20 an obvious choice as head of her house, she took to the

21 job with a will and found it a rewarding situation to be

22 in. She has a clear sense of direction which others

23 recognise and although she was not an all-round

24 achiever, games as such were not her strong point, she

25 had the courage to go out and do her best and show up

1 well in such situations as in the backpacking expedition
2 which is done in first year sixth. She had sympathy for
3 others but did not stand much time-wasting nonsense.
4 She managed to be both firm and reasonably popular with
5 the other members of the boarding house."
6 And then I think in short it expresses positive
7 views about your future.
8 A. And who wrote that? I can't read the signature.
9 Q. I think you'll find if it goes down it was the
10 headmaster.
11 A. The headmaster came and stayed with us in Saudi Arabia
12 to recruit students. He had a relationship with my
13 parents. It's interesting. It's interesting to read
14 that.
15 Q. Do you disagree with what he says about you? Do you
16 think that paints a fair picture of you?
17 A. In the diary he calls me ... "damaging and insecure" in
18 a spoken interview with him.
19 Q. Sorry --
20 A. At the same time I was desperate to leave, I pled to
21 leave and he -- in a meeting with me he's calling me
22 "damaging and insecure".
23 Q. He said you were damaging and insecure?
24 A. Uh-huh.
25 Q. So a way from what is put --

1 A. Which is quite a distance from this, yeah.

2 Q. Presumably it's correct that you were on the student
3 council and you were the head of house?

4 A. But I was a real pain in the ass.

5 Q. You were? What were you trying to achieve?

6 A. I was just desperate for someone to expel me. But
7 no one would have sex with me, so it was very difficult
8 to pull that off. I was a real pain in the ass and the
9 reason I was head of house is there wasn't really any
10 other candidates. It was -- people were desperate to
11 leave Windmill and move on to somewhere else.

12 Q. You've spoken about Windmill being spartan but by the
13 same token somewhere where the housemistress set
14 boundaries?

15 A. Uh-huh.

16 Q. Which from your perspective you found better?

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 Q. Within Windmill over the piece when you were head of
19 house, I mean you've talked obviously about concerns of
20 a lack of boundaries --

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. -- and we hear that in other houses, but in the Windmill
23 context, were you broadly happy?

24 A. She -- she was very kind with me, and I think could
25 see -- she'd had my father in her kitchen and knew what

1 I was up against, and she was fully supportive, perhaps,
2 of me, I understood that she was an ally, but I think
3 other people found her boundaries quite difficult in the
4 context of a school where there was not very many
5 others.

6 Q. All right. So in that sense she perhaps stood out --
7 A. For me --
8 Q. -- for you?
9 A. Yeah, and for others I think that her -- her keeping
10 things tight, other people probably really found that
11 difficult.

12 Q. The description of you as sympathetic to others, does
13 that ring true?
14 A. It's kind. I'm glad. I would want to be.

15 Q. The point I'm making is when you were head of house,
16 were you trying to improve the lot of the girls in your
17 house?
18 A. I really wanted to be listening and -- but I wish we had
19 been given some guidance about what a head of house
20 needed to be doing, and there wasn't. We were just sort
21 of told and we were supposed to be pleased with that,
22 but I would have loved some guidance about how I might
23 have reached and done something useful for others.

24 Q. That's what I was coming to. You've talked about the
25 houses being autonomous. There is no, from what you're

1 saying, guidance by the school down to the houses.

2 A. No.

3 Q. And, really, each house is determined by the character
4 of its leader?

5 A. Uh-huh.

6 Q. But even then, there's no formal guidance or structure
7 to explain or set out things?

8 A. In Windmill we got a room of our own if we were head of
9 house, which was amazing to be in a room of our own
10 finally, but otherwise there was nothing really clear
11 about how we might -- but I don't think that was
12 an ethos. The idea that any child needed support just
13 wasn't -- wasn't a -- wasn't part of the story and had
14 it been part of the story, then of course you would hope
15 that the head of house would be told to really look out
16 for people who needed it. But nobody needed support.
17 I think that was the general ethos.

18 Q. The expectation was you would cope?

19 A. Uh-huh, absolutely.

20 Q. As I said at the outset, we don't need to go into your
21 experiences because they are all set out, but I would
22 like to talk to you briefly, if I may, about two aspects
23 which aren't really words you used in the statement but
24 I think you may understand. One is the approach taken
25 by boys towards girls, in other words the potential for

1 misogyny. Was that prevalent?

2 A. Yeah. I didn't want to wear a skirt today. I'm very

3 rarely in a skirt. Yeah. Yeah, it was tough.

4 LADY SMITH: You didn't have to.

5 A. I wanted to be presentable.

6 LADY SMITH: Well, that's fine, so long as you were happy to

7 do so 'Jane'.

8 A. But there was just a sense, yeah, that if you're in

9 a skirt, you're ... yeah. I think a lot of girls went

10 out with much older boys, considerably older boys in

11 order to be able to have protection. And so were having

12 probably quite sexual relationships quite early and

13 young, but it was a way of keeping themselves safe.

14 MR BROWN: You may think this is a stupid question, but

15 protected from what?

16 A. Other boys.

17 Q. Right. And was that something that was ever the source

18 of concern/comment either by the house or by the school

19 as a whole?

20 A. No. No.

21 Q. You got expelled if you were having sex?

22 A. Yeah, absolutely.

23 Q. So there was clearly a boundary: you don't do that.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. But can we take it sexualised behaviour was, from what

1 you just said, common?

2 A. Absolutely.

3 Q. Given there is clearly a boundary, if you cross it

4 you're expelled, was the school taking steps to try and

5 prevent this, that you were aware of?

6 A. No, I -- no. I don't -- I don't think -- I don't think

7 so, no. I couldn't see any evidence of that.

8 Q. Well, within your house, for example, you've been quite

9 clear that your housemistress set boundaries. In your

10 house, would these boundaries in relation to sexual

11 matters be clearer perhaps than --

12 A. It was never talked about.

13 Q. It was never talked about?

14 A. No, never talked about.

15 Q. Okay. The other aspect is, and this is in relation

16 to -- you talk about the boys' houses obviously being

17 much worse and you were aware of bullying?

18 A. I think it was crazy.

19 Q. More crazy in some houses?

20 A. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, there was one -- one housemaster

21 who I really, really liked, he was Irish, and -- but

22 probably a bit of a drunk, and the amount of porn that

23 was found in that house -- and he just disappeared one

24 morning because he was found drunk in the house and

25 there was just enormous amounts of pornography found in

1 that house, whereas in Altyre I think it would be
2 weapons. It really sort of shows the kind of -- that
3 a whole society or a community would build up in one
4 house and it's different from another.

5 Q. And this is through the first half of the 1980s?

6 A. Uh-huh.

7 Q. Did that ever diminish, was it ever brought to heel?

8 A. I -- I -- I think changing the culture takes an enormous
9 effort and engagement, and perhaps expense, and I'm not
10 sure that any of those were available.

11 Q. Did you see any signs of an effort to change in the five
12 years you were at Gordonstoun?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Okay. But I was coming on to one particular aspect, and
15 this is paragraph 95 on page 21, you say:

16 "As a general observation for the boys I felt the
17 regime of self-governance was catastrophic."

18 But then you go on to say:

19 "The boys were cruel. They had a Jew hunt ..."

20 This is the second aspect I was coming onto in terms
21 of prejudice for religion, ethnicity -- was that
22 something that you remember?

23 A. I know that the two girls in Windmill Lodge, they were
24 from Nigeria and were very, very isolated, and I feel
25 sad that I didn't do anything about that. But they

1 would definitely say that the racism was unlivable with,
2 really, and their behaviour was incredibly anorexic,
3 bulimic, their behaviour showed how under stress they
4 were.

5 Q. That's in the house?

6 A. That's in the house, yeah.

7 Q. Did you see this more widely throughout the school? You
8 talk, obviously, about a boy being --

9 A. Yes. And this, of course, I wouldn't have witnessed,
10 I just heard it.

11 Q. Right.

12 A. But it would have been told in jest, as a joke, you
13 know, something to entertain others with. And, yeah,
14 I -- I think to humiliate others was part of the culture
15 and one way is through racism for sure.

16 Q. Again, same question: was anything done to try and stop
17 that?

18 A. No, and I'm sure the school would say, "We didn't know
19 anything about it", but I don't think they were seeking
20 to find that out.

21 Q. They wouldn't know about it, is that going back to the
22 regime of self-governance?

23 A. Self-governance but also total silence, sneaking was
24 deemed to be the worst possible crime, so no, neither of
25 those two girls would have ever dreamed of saying

1 anything.

2 Q. But from what you're saying, there were very obvious

3 symptoms?

4 A. Oh yeah, their behaviour was -- clearly they were under

5 a huge amount of stress. Terrible.

6 Q. But that wasn't picked up on?

7 A. No.

8 Q. You said that obviously you wanted out and you tried,

9 I think, to get out but didn't succeed.

10 A. No, I didn't.

11 Q. Paragraph 110 on page 24, you had to endure a further

12 18 months of school, having asked to leave.

13 A. I think that's why they gave me head of house.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. Give her a room on her own, that might shut her up.

16 Q. You did stay, but you didn't do particularly well in

17 your exams?

18 A. No, I completely bummed out.

19 Q. Can you say why you bummed out?

20 A. I think my self-confidence was so shredded by that

21 point, the idea that the headmaster can't even bother to

22 turn up to have those meetings with you just -- just

23 makes -- you know, you're so worthless. That's --

24 Q. Sorry, can you expand on the meeting?

25 A. Well, I'd asked -- he'd -- because he knew my parents

1 and they'd obviously rung him up and said, "You need to
2 deal with this, with her", so he wanted to meet with me
3 to discuss my leaving, and then he -- he spent the
4 entire hour humiliating me in that meeting, but he'd --
5 he'd not shown up twice -- for two previous bookings
6 that I'd made. He just wasn't -- didn't show up for
7 those two previous ones, and on the third he turned up
8 and, yeah, humiliated me through the hour.

9 Q. He wanted you to stay?

10 A. I think "want" is quite a strong word.

11 Q. What word would you use?

12 A. My parents wanted me to stay and he was delivering the
13 news. But also, I think, in terms of finances, it just
14 wasn't -- didn't really work, me dropping out in that
15 kind of time frame.

16 Q. And I think from something else you say in the
17 statement, did you feel pressure not to disappoint your
18 parents?

19 A. Yes. Yes. I think they were -- they were appalled by
20 my exam results.

21 Q. So when it came time to leave Gordonstoun, what were
22 your feelings?

23 A. Ruined. I felt ruined. Yeah. And I -- I think that
24 loss of moral compass meant that I just accepted
25 everything that followed and that's -- that's been hard.

1 Q. That moves us on then perhaps to page 30 and
2 paragraph 134 which starts with the heading, "Impact".
3 You say at paragraph 135:
4 "I think school has had an enormous impact on me,
5 school and my home life created a vulnerability in me
6 which was clear."
7 And has that followed you through the rest of your
8 life?
9 A. (Witness nods). Yes. I mean, I probably would have
10 said that it wasn't having such an impact, but I think
11 turning up today has just been terrible. So it's
12 clearly -- clearly still so difficult, and yeah, feels
13 very present.
14 Q. Okay. What would you hope comes from this Inquiry?
15 A. I really feel shame that children who were in care and
16 are being -- are a part of this Inquiry too, because
17 I got holidays and I really would love that every child
18 in the future feels safe. At the absolute minimum, they
19 feel safe. And, yeah, that support -- and supported.
20 Q. I know, and we don't need to go into it, but obviously
21 you have been receiving help.
22 A. (Witness nods).
23 Q. Are you still receiving help?
24 A. Yeah. Very gratefully.
25 Q. Very gratefully. Do you have any views on what response

1 Gordonstoun should provide now?

2 A. Well, I -- I think -- I think the -- so blame -- I don't

3 know if they're blaming us or looking for excuses or

4 whatever. I just -- it would be great if they felt big

5 enough to support those children and continue as

6 a priority to make sure the children that they're

7 looking after now are absolutely safe.

8 Q. In that regard, you said earlier on that it takes a lot

9 to change.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. I think we both know that obviously the current

12 principal has been in touch with you.

13 A. (Witness nods).

14 Q. And has very publicly apologised for the past and makes

15 clear in public pronouncements that there are real

16 efforts to change now. Do you accept that?

17 A. Yes. Yes.

18 Q. Do you welcome it?

19 A. Yes, I just -- I just don't trust the story, but that

20 comes out of a very -- yeah, a very beleaguered kind of

21 experience with the institution and so, yeah, the lack

22 of trust continues, unfortunately. But I -- but

23 I understand that I'm -- I'm what's wrong rather than

24 perhaps the school.

25 Q. Well, you talk about not feeling safe at school. Does

1 that lack of safety persist now? Might that explain
2 your thought process?

3 A. Absolutely, absolutely.

4 Q. The point being that the impact of school is still
5 prevalent?

6 A. Absolutely, yeah, yeah.

7 LADY SMITH: Might it also be that building trust is hard
8 work and may take a long time?

9 A. (Witness nods).

10 LADY SMITH: I'm not talking about hard work for you or
11 a long time for you, but hard work and taking a long
12 time for the person or institution that's lost the trust
13 of others.

14 A. Yes. Yes, and I hope -- I hope that the exceptionalism
15 of an institution like that is not an excuse to be lazy.
16 Because it really -- it will take enormous amounts of
17 work.

18 MR BROWN: 'Jane', thank you very much indeed. Is there
19 anything else you would wish to say?

20 A. No. Thank you. Thank you.

21 MR BROWN: Thank you very much.

22 LADY SMITH: Are there any outstanding applications for
23 questions?

24 'Jane', that does complete all the questions we have
25 for you today.

1 A. Thank you.

2 LADY SMITH: Thank you so much for your engagement with the
3 Inquiry, both for providing the detailed written
4 statement that's got so much in it that is relevant for
5 the work that we're doing in relation to this part of
6 the case study, and thank you for the frank and open way
7 in which you've coped with the questioning today.
8 Please know that I don't begin to underestimate the
9 effort that goes into appearing to be able to deal with
10 something in a light-hearted, friendly way that is
11 really hard material to handle.

12 A. Thank you.

13 LADY SMITH: I do know that, and I greatly appreciate the
14 efforts you've made this morning.

15 A. I really appreciate you listening. Thank you.

16 LADY SMITH: Thank you for that, thank you for coming, and
17 I'm now able to let you go.

18 (The witness withdrew)

19 LADY SMITH: It's a little early, but I think we ought to
20 take the break now so that we can get the link checked
21 for the next witness.

22 MR BROWN: I was going to say I appreciate it's slightly
23 early, we could have contemplated a read-in, but because
24 of technical issues, I would welcome just a little more
25 time, perhaps, to make sure everything is functioning

1 for the next videolink.

2 LADY SMITH: I hope it's all right now, but I did hear that

3 there were some glitches this morning that needed

4 ironing out.

5 MR BROWN: That's the last I heard, I'm sure things will

6 have moved on but if I could check.

7 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

8 (11.17)

9 (A short break)

10 (11.41 am)

11 LADY SMITH: Well, Mr Brown, it looks as though the link has

12 been successfully made, if this is the right person

13 that's showing up, is it?

14 MR BROWN: All systems appear to be go.

15 LADY SMITH: Good.

16 MR BROWN: My Lady, this is the next witness, David Hanson.

17 LADY SMITH: First of all, would you like me to call you

18 David or would you like me to call you Mr Hanson?

19 THE WITNESS: Thank you, Lady Smith, I'd like to be called

20 David, please.

21 LADY SMITH: Thank you for that, David. You obviously have

22 worked out who I am, I chair the Scottish Child Abuse

23 Inquiry, I'm Lady Smith.

24 David Hanson (sworn)

25 LADY SMITH: David, thank you for joining us over the link

1 this morning. You're about to give your evidence, and
2 Mr Brown obviously is going to help you with that, but
3 could I just say at the outset, if you have any problems
4 with the link, please let us know immediately. But
5 also, if you have any questions or queries or you want
6 a break, that's absolutely fine by me. Whatever works
7 best for you works best for me, so please don't hesitate
8 to ask. Is that all right?

9 A. Thank you.

10 LADY SMITH: Very well. I'll hand over to Mr Brown and
11 we'll take it from there, David.

12 Mr Brown?

13 Questions from Mr Brown

14 MR BROWN: My Lady.

15 David, hello again.

16 A. Hello, Andrew.

17 Q. I think you have two documents before you which have
18 been provided to you. One is your statement?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And if we can begin with that. This is a statement that
21 you provided to the Inquiry over quite a long process of
22 drafts and then the final form, which I think, as we see
23 on the final page, page 21, you signed on 9 January
24 2021?

25 A. That is correct, yes.

1 Q. And for form's sake, there's a reference to go with this
2 document, which is WIT-1-000000602.
3 The final paragraph of the statement, 116, says:
4 "I have no objection to my witness statement being
5 published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry.
6 I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are
7 true."
8 Now, obviously you signed that with the best of
9 intent but I think, having reflected on matters, you
10 came back a month later saying, "Actually, I think I've
11 got one bit wrong"; is that correct?
12 A. That is correct.
13 Q. And it's in relation to paragraph 76 and you think that
14 the first two sentences in paragraph 76 may not be
15 factually accurate?
16 A. That is correct.
17 Q. Just to be clear, we were grateful for you to pick that
18 up and that is understood.
19 A. Thank you.
20 Q. Those line aside, you're content this statement is
21 accurate?
22 A. Yes.
23 Q. Thank you very much indeed. Having introduced the
24 statement into evidence, we don't need to laboriously go
25 through it, which is no doubt a relief for you and me,

1 but there are obviously themes that I would wish to talk
2 to you about because you spent, would it be fair to say,
3 your working career at Aberlour House?

4 A. Yes, apart from the year before that teaching in Slough.
5 Q. Quite a difference.
6 A. A huge difference.

7 Q. And can we take it from the fact that you remained at
8 Aberlour for decades, you preferred the Highlands?

9 A. I preferred the Highlands and the nature of the school.
10 Q. All right, we'll come onto that. Slough was just
11 a state secondary school, was it, or was it a private?

12 A. No, state secondary school.
13 Q. All right. And you taught science there, having
14 obtained a science degree at university?

15 A. That's correct.
16 Q. And I think you are now 79, but just to be clear, you
17 started in Aberlour in 1965, when you were, I think, 24?

18 A. Yes.
19 Q. And you remained there until 2001?

20 A. I did. When I retired.
21 Q. Age 60, so 36 years?

22 A. Yes.
23 Q. All right. Now, you had a science degree, you started
24 off life, as we know, as a science teacher, but would it
25 be fair to say that Aberlour was not like Slough in the

1 sense you had a clear role, Aberlour was a school where
2 perhaps you mucked in as required?

3 A. Yes. It was made obvious from the start that this was
4 a full-time commitment and you were there to do far more
5 than just teach in the classroom.

6 Q. All right, we'll come back to that. Can I ask, how did
7 you find yourself moving from Slough to Aberlour? What
8 happened?

9 A. It's a long story but I'll make it as short as possible.
10 First of all, I'd spent many weekends travelling to
11 Scotland, usually hitchhiking, up to Loch Lomond side,
12 even up to Loch Ness. I just love Scotland and some
13 holidays there. So when I saw the advert in The Times
14 Educational Supplement it appealed to me. I had spent
15 some time in Slough, visiting Eton College, particularly
16 to look at the way in which they organised their science
17 laboratories and how they made their science workbenches
18 and I was impressed by what I saw at Eton. Prior to
19 that, my knowledge of independent schools and boarding
20 schools was restricted to Tom Brown's Schooldays and
21 things I'd read in the papers.

22 But when I saw the advert for Aberlour House, it
23 just struck a bell with me. So: looking for a young,
24 energetic bachelor to take charge of mathematics and
25 science. And I thought: yes, north Scotland, I will

1 investigate. So I did, read about Gordonstoun, which
2 was in the news at the time, and Kurt Hahn and his
3 educational philosophy, and it just seemed like a really
4 good idea to apply for the job. I did.

5 Q. And in terms of the process of applying, you were
6 interviewed?

7 A. I was interviewed and I believe that it was in Slough by
8 the headmaster. It may just have been in London but
9 I think Slough, and as a result of that I was invited to
10 the school for a few days to see around and to see if it
11 was going to suit me. From the minute I arrived at
12 Craigellachie railway station I thought wow.

13 Then the drive to the school with Ben Nevis in the
14 background was amazing and more and more I thought this
15 looks like a good idea.

16 Then introduction to the school and the children,
17 who were also positive and happy and friendly, and I was
18 taken across to Gordonstoun, I think on that weekend.
19 And was introduced to Kurt Hahn. If I needed any
20 further convincing, the few minutes spent with Kurt Hahn
21 would have sealed it. If anyone could have a halo, it
22 was Kurt Hahn. He was just revered or treated with
23 respect and reverence with everybody, and he just had
24 a magical appearance and I thought yes. So I was
25 delighted when I was formally offered the job.

1 Q. Thank you. What did you understand at that time of the
2 interview was the relationship between Aberlour and
3 Gordonstoun?

4 A. At that time, the letter-headed paper was Aberlour
5 House, the Gordonstoun junior school, if I remember
6 correctly.

7 Q. Might it have been "the Gordonstoun preparatory school"?

8 A. Yes, my understanding was that it was the Gordonstoun
9 preparatory school and apart from its geographical
10 separation, was part of the system. They had the same
11 founder and so on.

12 Q. Although I think, as you say in your statement, although
13 the school was essentially still the Gordonstoun
14 preparatory school, the school did prepare pupils for
15 other senior schools?

16 A. Yes. Very, very few in the earlier years I was there,
17 but more and more as the school progressed.

18 Q. We've heard this morning that certainly to some pupils
19 it was viewed as an expectation you would go from one to
20 the other, progress on from Aberlour to Gordonstoun.

21 A. Yes, I think this was the general rule.

22 Q. And again we heard this morning that even if you failed
23 the exam for Gordonstoun, you would still get in if you
24 came from Aberlour.

25 A. I'm not sure that that was correct.

1 Q. All right. Who interviewed you for the post?
2 A. It was the headmaster at the time.
3 Q. Right. And was that the headmaster who was in place
4 when you started?
5 A. Yes.
6 Q. What was his name?
7 A. Toby Coghill.
8 Q. Right. I just wanted to be clear it was Toby Coghill,
9 I think, throughout most of the first decades of your
10 time at Aberlour?
11 A. It was.
12 Q. What was your impression of him?
13 A. One, a highly organised, motivated educator, treated
14 with respect by everybody, resourceful, imaginative.
15 An inspiration.
16 Q. You said in that description or you used the word
17 "resourceful". Should we understand that running
18 Aberlour in terms of the finances was not necessarily
19 straightforward?
20 A. I think that there were times where the school was not
21 exactly hard up, but it needed to take advantage of
22 opportunities to make things and do things in-house
23 rather than rely upon a lot of external factors.
24 Q. From what you say, the headmaster was very much the
25 controlling figure?

1 A. Yes, it was his school and he was there the whole time
2 and liked to be in control of everything.

3 Q. And we understand his wife also played a role too?

4 A. Yes, Lady Coghill was sort of in charge of the domestic
5 side and the matron side of the school and also played
6 a very full, active part in the life of the school.

7 Q. Though would we understand correctly that she wasn't
8 employed by the school, that was just part -- they came
9 as a team?

10 A. I'm afraid I can't be sure about that.

11 Q. Thank you. There were, however, we understand, matrons
12 in place to provide some sort of supervision?

13 A. That's correct.

14 Q. And was that a constant throughout your 30-plus years?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Thinking back to Slough, was that quite a regimented
17 school in the sense rules were clear and people would
18 understand what boundaries were?

19 A. I'm afraid that's a very difficult question to answer.
20 The discipline at the school was not great, and there
21 was a -- I would think, I would say, a fairly high staff
22 turnover.

23 Q. What about --

24 A. Truancy was a major problem.

25 Q. It's a city school or an urban school?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Aberlour, by contrast, obviously it's run very much by
3 the headmaster and his views on the world, from what
4 you're saying. Were rules set out clearly or was it
5 more relaxed?

6 A. I would say that there were rules, but it was also far
7 more relaxed.

8 Q. And when you say "far more relaxed", what sort of things
9 are you thinking about?

10 A. Less red tape. The ability to use your initiative, to
11 do things without having to fill in multiple forms.
12 When I was at Slough, I was -- as part of science we
13 wanted to explore the River Thames and the water voles
14 which were on the banks and to do that I had to fill in
15 multiple forms in different colours weeks in advance and
16 you didn't know what the weather was going to be like
17 weeks in advance. It was a major hindrance to doing
18 anything imaginative in the science field.

19 Whereas at Aberlour House you had a good idea, you
20 said to Sir Toby, "I'd like to take a group off and
21 collect woodlice somewhere", "Yes, that's fine, go
22 ahead."

23 Q. I think, as you say in your statement, risk assessments
24 came after his departure?

25 A. Formal risk assessments I would say did, but we were

1 doing risk assessments the whole time. But we didn't --
2 at least I don't remember the words "risk assessments"
3 being used until later.

4 Q. To be fair to you, what you say in paragraph 11, three
5 lines from the bottom:

6 "We carried out risk assessments as a matter of
7 course using common sense and health and safety issues
8 were addressed automatically without specific labels."

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. So formal policies which seem to have existed in 1964 in
11 Slough weren't present in Aberlour, certainly until the
12 headmaster's departure in 1991?

13 A. I wouldn't have said that there were policies
14 established at Slough. Policies did -- were more
15 obvious after Sir Toby retired, but I wouldn't say that
16 they were absent before then. I just don't remember
17 them.

18 Q. Thank you. Obviously the Inquiry is particularly
19 interested in child protection. I think at paragraph 16
20 of your statement on page 4 you say:

21 "I do not remember child protection receiving
22 special attention until about 1991, but in a small
23 generally very happy family atmosphere community people
24 looked out for each other. I remember a Childline
25 poster displayed in the school's payphone telephone box

1 from the mid 1980s, at or shortly after the foundation
2 of Childline in 1986."

3 So in relation to child protection, is it the same
4 approach as to health and safety and risk assessment:
5 common sense is felt to be enough?

6 A. I think that the concerns -- everything was in place,
7 but without it being necessarily printed out and posted
8 everywhere. I'm sorry, that's really a difficult one to
9 answer because as far as I'm aware, everything was
10 absolutely fine in a small community. There were no
11 issues.

12 Q. Was there an assumption --

13 A. Sorry, I do remember a Childline poster appearing and
14 the explanation for it being there.

15 Q. In this small community, were assumptions made, do you
16 think?

17 A. I think quite possibly.

18 Q. It was assumed, presumably, (a) it wouldn't happen, or
19 (b) that if it did, you'd find out about it?

20 A. I don't think anybody even considered the possibility.

21 Q. Okay. You've described it as having a family
22 atmosphere, and again from your statement one gets the
23 picture that that was certainly the perception you had:
24 this was a big family?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And that, from your perspective, persisted throughout
2 your entire career?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Did that ethos from your perspective change ever?

5 A. I think that as the school grew larger, the family
6 atmosphere was still there but it was not quite the same
7 as it was when I started.

8 Q. Were any steps taken to address that shift by formally
9 putting in place policies or considering the potential
10 of child protection issues?

11 A. I would say yes, but I couldn't give you a particular
12 example.

13 Q. I think, in fairness to you, you were not involved in
14 management of the school save for one particular period;
15 is that correct?

16 A. I'm sorry, could you repeat the question?

17 Q. Of course. I think, bar one period in 1991 when you
18 were acting head --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- management roles was not your thing?

21 A. That's correct.

22 Q. Were you happier simply teaching, taking expeditions,
23 looking after the pupils?

24 A. Yes, I was -- I saw my main role as being a teacher,
25 a facilitator and so on, although I was appointed deputy

1 head and gained responsibilities -- took on
2 responsibilities for timetabling and so on.

3 Q. If I may, I'll come back to that. You've said that this
4 was not an ordinary teaching job and you were playing
5 roles as necessary. We would understand that within the
6 school building, dormitories are in the main house,
7 classrooms are in the outbuildings, and that there was
8 --

9 A. Yes --

10 Q. Sorry, I interrupted you. Carry on.

11 A. Yes, I would say yes, although later on the classrooms
12 were joined to the main building.

13 Q. Again, presumably because of numbers?

14 A. No, I would say the classrooms were joined to the main
15 building so that the children didn't have to go out into
16 the snow and ice. It was a practical solution.

17 Q. Was that a sign of the school becoming a little softer
18 in its approach?

19 A. I think you could argue that, yes.

20 Q. Because we have the picture of, as you've talked about,
21 expeditions going out in all-weather?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And it was quite a tough environment, on one view?

24 A. Some people -- yes, a lot of people have said it was
25 quite a rigorous, strenuous aspect to life.

1 Q. And was that true within the school, thinking of the
2 boarders' experience? Dormitories, shared washing
3 facilities, shared dining perhaps not of the greatest
4 quality?

5 A. I thought the dining arrangements were very good.
6 I don't think I would argue that it was tough. It maybe
7 didn't suit everybody, but as I saw it, it was fine.

8 Q. Just in relation to the catering arrangements, we've
9 heard from a number of people who have been to the
10 school that there was pressure to finish your food and
11 you --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. -- you had to sit until you'd eaten everything up. Does
14 that accord with your recollection?

15 A. No, I think that's a rather harsh recollection. I think
16 generally, yes, children were encouraged to eat what
17 they had. The food was, I believe, good. Sometimes
18 basic, maybe, but good wholesome food. I can't imagine
19 a child being forced to sit until they'd finished every
20 little bit.

21 Q. That's not your recollection?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Thank you.

24 A. I'm not saying it didn't happen, but it's not my
25 recollection.

1 Q. But in terms of supervision of the children away from
2 the teaching or the expedition environment, we would
3 understand staff would take it in turn to supervise in
4 the evenings, overnight; is that correct?

5 A. Generally speaking, there were staff who would -- if it
6 was an independent camping group of children, say, then
7 a member of staff would usually go out and just check
8 everything was fine, maybe sit and have a couple of hot
9 chocolate with the group and then leave them to it.

10 Q. Is that within the school grounds you're talking?

11 A. That would be within the school grounds or in the wider
12 community, out in the hills.

13 Q. So children would be allowed just to go off camping on
14 their own?

15 A. They would be allowed -- yes, in established groups with
16 responsible pupils leading.

17 Q. Expeditions, which were perhaps rather more involved,
18 would they normally introduce a member of staff who
19 would supervise the expedition?

20 A. Not always, but yes, generally.

21 Q. Again, if you can remember, did you lead these
22 expeditions?

23 A. I did on many occasions.

24 Q. And should we understand that that would be just you
25 from the teaching staff and a group of children?

1 A. In the early years, yes, but not always. In the later
2 years, generally two members of staff.

3 Q. Why the change?

4 A. I think because of health and safety issues.

5 Q. Were there any child protection concerns?

6 A. I don't think so, but certainly a female member of staff
7 for the sake of the girls was a good idea.

8 Q. And in terms of camp -- presumably these would be going
9 out with tents to stay overnight in the outdoors?

10 A. Yes -- not always. Occasionally just sleeping under the
11 stars using survival rugs, maybe, sleeping in a cave,
12 a whole variety of experiences.

13 Q. Again if you can remember, when you were taking groups
14 of children out with tents, would you expect to have
15 your own tent?

16 A. Most of the time, yes.

17 Q. But not always?

18 A. But not always.

19 Q. Was that a matter of concern, the idea of a teacher
20 sleeping with pupils in the same tent?

21 A. It never occurred to me that it might be.

22 Q. At any stage?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Would you have slept in the same tent as girls?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Was that because you wouldn't do that or because there
2 was a school rule forbidding it?

3 A. I wasn't aware of a school rule, but no, I wouldn't have
4 done it.

5 Q. Obvious question: why not?

6 A. It would not have seemed proper.

7 Q. But should we understand that's just you saying,
8 "I don't think this is proper", rather than someone
9 saying to you, "You mustn't"?

10 A. This has never even entered my mind. I think the answer
11 is yes.

12 Q. Thank you. Can I talk to you about the supervision of
13 the pupils in the house. We've heard evidence that at
14 times you might stay overnight, there was a room that
15 you could use, albeit you lived --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. -- elsewhere most of the time?

18 A. That is correct.

19 Q. With your family?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. When you were supervising, say, overnight, what would
22 your functions be? I appreciate this is a very general
23 question covering years of service, but was there
24 a routine that you would follow?

25 A. It was a very complicated situation. Generally when

1 I was deputy head, I stayed in the school if the
2 headmaster was away for any reason, at a conference or
3 away for any other reason. The room I had was a study,
4 but at one time it would have had a bed in it which
5 could be made to look like a sofa except when I was
6 asleep on it. At other times, the study -- I had
7 a three-piece suite in it and what I'll call a chair bed
8 which opened out for sleeping. But it was basically
9 a study with a facility.

10 Q. Thank you. But presumably your role when you're staying
11 overnight is to supervise the children in the evenings
12 and, as necessary, overnight, which would include, for
13 example, supervising them going to bed and in the
14 morning getting up and washing?

15 A. The duties there were -- it varied over the years, but
16 in the early years there was a member of staff on duty
17 and the member of staff on duty for a particular day
18 would be there before the rising bell, ring the rising
19 bell, and supervise the children's general activities,
20 including line-ups, checking housework, checking
21 absolutely everything until the children went to bed at
22 night.

23 Q. Were there --

24 A. Duty staff, it was an exhausting full day, from
25 7 o'clock in the evening until 9 o'clock at night.

1 Q. Yes. Were there any boundaries set on what such
2 supervising staff should or should not do?

3 A. I don't remember any particular boundaries. The time
4 was completely full from the minute you got there in the
5 morning to the minute you left at night. If things
6 needed doing, you did them but otherwise you were aware
7 of all the things that the children were doing all the
8 way through the day.

9 Q. Thinking, obviously, you've said you wouldn't have slept
10 in a tent overnight with female pupils, you as a male
11 teacher, would you have gone, for example, into the
12 girls' washrooms?

13 A. No. The duty staff -- all duty staff would in -- in the
14 early years, all the duty staff would have had occasion
15 to go into the girls' dormitories and put the lights out
16 at night, just a cheery goodnight, and in the first of
17 our school promotional videos one of the most charming
18 sequences was of the housemaster at the time popping
19 into a girls' dormitory and saying goodnight.

20 Q. But in terms of propriety, can I take it that you
21 wouldn't, for example, go into a girls' bathroom when
22 girls were washing?

23 A. Oh, definitely not.

24 Q. But again was that simply your sense of propriety as
25 opposed to a formal rule?

1 A. I don't remember a formal rule. I'm sorry. I'm fairly
2 certain it was an unwritten rule.

3 Q. Was it again an assumption that people wouldn't do that
4 sort of thing?

5 A. I think it probably was.

6 Q. You've talked about the family atmosphere that was
7 Aberlour. Obviously within families perhaps life is
8 more relaxed. Was there a relaxation, if I can put it
9 this way, of what might be considered proper in any
10 respect at all as, for example, in terms of nudity?

11 A. I don't think so.

12 Q. We've heard about "birthday baths". Does that ring any
13 bells?

14 A. Sorry, can you repeat that?

15 Q. Yes. We've heard the phrase "birthday baths", in other
16 words celebrating a pupil's birthday involving a bath.
17 Does that ring any bells?

18 A. Not at all.

19 Q. Not at all?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Sorry, that caught me completely by surprise. No.

23 Q. Did you ever see any child naked in your 30-plus years
24 at Aberlour?

25 A. I'm sure I did in the very early years. Children swam

1 naked in the swimming pool. Later on, never.

2 Q. Why would they be swimming naked in the swimming pool?

3 A. Before the school became co-educational that was just

4 the way it was.

5 Q. Was that the way it was when you arrived?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Were you puzzled that swimming trunks weren't worn?

8 A. It caught me by surprise, yes.

9 Q. But you accepted it as just the way it was?

10 A. It -- yes.

11 Q. And that persisted until co-education commenced,

12 I think, in the 1970s?

13 A. It may have changed before that, I can't remember when.

14 Q. All right. Can I ask you about recruitment of staff

15 more generally? Obviously you found the job in The

16 Times Educational Supplement, but was employment of

17 staff always that formal in the sense of people

18 applying? Do you remember teaches simply being

19 appointed?

20 A. No, I believe so.

21 Q. There was always a process?

22 A. I believe there was an established Times Educational

23 Supplement followed by letter of application,

24 references, interview at the school, and in later years

25 potential members of staff were asked to teach a lesson

1 to a class.

2 Q. Was that after 1991 or 1990 and the departure of the

3 longstanding headmaster?

4 A. I would say that teaching a lesson to a class probably

5 started before he retired, but I couldn't be certain.

6 Q. No. It's just that we have heard evidence which

7 suggested that teachers who were known to the headmaster

8 might find themselves teaching at the school. Does that

9 accord with your memory?

10 A. I can't remember a single case, but I'm not saying that

11 it was not. I can't remember any.

12 LADY SMITH: David, would you necessarily know whether or

13 not a teacher had gone through the process you

14 described?

15 A. No, I'm afraid I probably wouldn't.

16 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

17 A. I was occasionally shown letters of application and

18 perhaps a CV or two, but apart from that, I really had

19 no part in the application process.

20 MR BROWN: Thank you. We've also heard that assistants, if

21 I can describe it that way, or students who had just

22 finished school might join Aberlour for a year, so we're

23 talking 18/19-year-olds who've just finished their own

24 schooling would be brought in to help, particularly with

25 sport, for example, sometimes from abroad.

1 A. Yes. Quite a few people who were former pupils came
2 back as assistants, and others recruited, I think, from
3 schools like the -- I can't remember its name, but the
4 school in Australia which was almost related to
5 Gordonstoun. Timbertops, was it?

6 LADY SMITH: Treetops? No?

7 A. Timber --

8 LADY SMITH: It doesn't matter.

9 A. Sorry, I can't remember its name, but I think it was --
10 the school had contacts with other schools in different
11 parts of the country.

12 MR BROWN: And that's perhaps the point, that it was
13 connections that would lead to these young men -- and
14 young women? Or was it always men?

15 A. No, both sexes.

16 Q. -- joining, whether from the UK or Australia, as you
17 recollect; that's because they are connected to Aberlour
18 or Gordonstoun or the Round Square, perhaps?

19 A. That would not always be the case, but I think it was
20 sometimes the case.

21 Q. Again, if you don't know, please just say. Are you
22 aware, was there any assessment done about the propriety
23 of these people?

24 A. I don't know. I assume so.

25 Q. You've talked about the school being very much,

1 certainly under his tenure, being Toby Coghill's school,
2 it was his school to run, if you like?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. In terms of discipline, was discipline really controlled
5 by him? It was his view of what discipline should be
6 that counted?

7 A. I would say yes, but I don't remember discipline ever
8 being a problem. There were minor issues, but I don't
9 remember any serious issues.

10 Q. And I think, as you say, that's in part because of the
11 cohesive nature of a small school which has a family
12 atmosphere?

13 A. Yes. And also the emphasis on rewards rather than
14 punishments.

15 Q. I think, to go back to your statement, this is the
16 system of pluses and minuses?

17 A. Yes. Although there were different names given to them
18 over the years.

19 Q. Failures and mentions being another?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. But we have heard that the cane could be used, but would
22 you understand that would be only by the headmaster?

23 A. Certainly, that was my understanding. I don't remember
24 ever seeing it and I believe it was kept in the
25 headmaster's study and I cannot remember any time that

1 it was used.

2 Q. As an educator presumably you would understand the

3 phrase "pastoral care"?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. But from what you've been saying, was that a phrase that

6 took on currency later in your career rather than at the

7 beginning?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Can you remember -- and again, please, if you can't just

10 say so -- but when was the idea of pastoral care

11 a quantity, a known quantity at Aberlour?

12 A. I'm sorry, I don't know when the term "pastoral care"

13 first came into conversation. It was automatically

14 taken for granted that everybody in the community had

15 a role to play.

16 Q. You as a teacher would be looking out for unhappiness in

17 pupils?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Can you say the same of other teachers?

20 A. I can't speak for them, but I'm sure they all did.

21 Q. And is part of that because of the culture that you

22 describe within Aberlour House, looking to paragraph 35

23 on page 7:

24 "The school was like an extended family, it was

25 a very happy environment for pupils and staff to

1 develop. Governors, staff, parents and pupils treated
2 each other with a friendly respect. Although it was not
3 until 1991 that I formalised my understanding of what
4 a school community was about into the ten Rs listed
5 below, I believe that these qualities featured all the
6 time."

7 And in your statement you've set out the ten Rs,
8 which include the three, reading, writing and
9 arithmetic?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. But then go on to respect, responsibility, reliability,
12 resourcefulness, resolve, restraint and remorse.

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. That was formalised by you into the ten Rs, but you
15 would understand that that was present throughout, it
16 just happened?

17 A. It just -- I'm sure that was just a way of life in the
18 school.

19 Q. If you had concerns about a pupil, how would you raise
20 them?

21 A. With the headmaster.

22 Q. And would that be the end of it, it would then be in his
23 hands to resolve as he saw fit?

24 A. I would say yes, but can I just go back a second and say
25 that if it was a health issue, then of course the matron

1 would be the first person to consult.

2 Q. I was thinking perhaps more of a pastoral issue.

3 A. It would then be the housemaster or house -- the
4 equivalent in the female side.

5 Q. For them to resolve or for them to take to the
6 headmaster?

7 A. I would say for them to resolve if they could, but if
8 not, take to the headmaster.

9 Q. I think in particular in relation to child protection
10 arrangements you say at paragraph 65:

11 "I feel that if there were any significant concerns
12 they would have gone straight to the headmaster. If
13 there was a minor issue between children, then the first
14 member of staff to become aware would probably have made
15 an attempt to resolve the problem, but if it was
16 a serious issue, it would have been reported to the
17 headmaster."

18 Is that just it's a judgement for the teacher
19 involved as to where on the scale a problem lies?

20 A. Yes, I think that's correct.

21 Q. You then go on in paragraph 66:

22 "I don't remember any specific child protection
23 arrangements. This was a small family atmosphere
24 community where children were regarded as young people
25 rather than names on a list. Staff, parents and pupils

1 generally knew each other well and there was a general
2 atmosphere of friendship. Although I do not remember
3 formal child protection arrangements I never thought to
4 question the lack of it. I thought the school community
5 functioned well."

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. That's a fair summary?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Did it enter your head that it might be a problem?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Just to be clear about the time frame, you started in
12 the mid 60s. You continue there, obviously, until the
13 beginning of the next century, and Toby Coghill retires
14 about 1990; is that correct?

15 A. 1989.

16 Q. 1989, thank you. He was replaced by new headmaster
17 Brian Head; is that correct?

18 A. That's correct.

19 Q. But Mr Head didn't last very long?

20 A. He didn't stay very long.

21 Q. Why was that?

22 A. I find that almost impossible to answer. At the time
23 I did not understand and I still do not fully understand
24 why that was so short.

25 Q. But whatever the reason, it was short, and is this the

1 point that you had to step in?

2 A. This was the point at which the governors said would
3 I run the school for a year.

4 Q. And you did?

5 A. And I did.

6 Q. Having run the school for a year, a new head would be
7 appointed and take the reins from you?

8 A. That is correct.

9 Q. With a sigh of relief on your part?

10 A. No, I'm afraid not, no. I did apply for the job,
11 having enjoyed it so, so much. It was a very rewarding
12 and fulfilling year. And when the post became vacant at
13 the retirement of Toby Coghill I did not apply for the
14 job. I was very happy just being a teacher. But when,
15 with the experience of a year running the school,
16 I began to appreciate that this was something that
17 I would quite like to do.

18 Q. Thank you. In the year that you did run it, did you
19 change much?

20 A. I don't think I changed anything. I did introduce a few
21 new ideas, like encouraging people from outside the
22 school, professional people, such as a minister, I think
23 the police, a fireman, a governor to come into the
24 school to talk to senior pupils informally just to
25 broaden their experience, but also to give the wider

1 community outside the school community an opportunity to
2 see how the school functioned.

3 Q. So to open it up in both directions, both for the
4 community and the pupils?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. What about structural change in terms of issues like
7 child protection, making that more formal? Was that
8 something you did or contemplated?

9 A. On a formal basis, no, but drawing things together, yes.

10 Q. And what did that mean in practice, drawing things
11 together?

12 A. Talking to all staff. This was long-established staff
13 who'd been there for many years, recently appointed
14 staff and new staff so that we were all working towards
15 the future of the school.

16 Q. That didn't happen under Sir Toby?

17 A. No, I would say it did.

18 Q. It did?

19 A. I would say it was -- it was -- in Sir Toby's time it
20 was absolutely fine, but we had a number of staff
21 changes in a short period of time.

22 Q. Sorry, you had a number of staff?

23 A. Changes.

24 Q. Changes, thank you.

25 A. In that very short period of time just before I took

1 over and when I took over.

2 Q. I was coming to that, and obviously you will be aware

3 why, because we know there were allegations raised of

4 abuse of children at Aberlour and the result was that

5 staff left very rapidly. I take it you remember that?

6 A. I do.

7 Q. Were you taken aback when that happened?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Tell us what you remember, from your perspective what

10 happened?

11 A. This is -- can you just clarify exactly which -- am

12 I allowed to mention names or not?

13 Q. I think in relation to 1990 yes. You've talked about

14 Derek Jones.

15 A. Yes. Right. Derek Jones as a person I found to be

16 difficult. He had a habit of rubbing people up the

17 wrong way. I think he was probably a very, very good

18 teacher of English. He was very popular with the --

19 with a group of pupils, particularly the senior boys.

20 In the words of one former pupil, he was a know-it-all,

21 a show off, and I think that probably sums it up.

22 Q. Had you ever had any worries about him in terms of the

23 potential of abusing children?

24 A. No.

25 Q. But I think you would understand that it became apparent

1 that that was what was being suggested, he had abused,
2 I think as we would now know, two children?
3 A. I'm sorry, I only know of one.
4 Q. Well, I think we are aware of one who gave evidence
5 yesterday, John Findlay, who you --
6 A. Yes, that is the one I'm familiar with.
7 Q. Though we would understand from both John Findlay and
8 other sources that another child complained of abuse
9 too. You weren't aware of that?
10 A. I didn't know that.
11 Q. All right. But when that came into the open, what
12 happened at Aberlour House? What was the response of
13 the headmaster?
14 A. My recollection is not necessarily the same as other
15 things that I've heard, but as I understand it, this
16 was -- attention was down to this by the matron,
17 I believe because John was under the weather, and then
18 as far as I'm aware the police were called immediately
19 and I do remember the police visiting and interviewing
20 more or less everybody I think. At that time
21 I believed, and I think everybody else did, that it was
22 just the sleeping pill incident. Please stop me if
23 I say anything you don't want me to say.
24 Q. No, no, please carry on.
25 A. And then, because of that, an unwise, irresponsible

1 action on the part of Mr Jones, he was sacked.

2 Then it was only after he had gone and in the

3 holidays I believe that the idea of abuse came to light.

4 Q. Thank you. So your understanding was he'd given the

5 pupil a sleeping pill?

6 A. That was what I understood at the time, yes.

7 Q. Who from?

8 A. Sorry, who?

9 Q. Who gave you that understanding?

10 A. I think in discussion with the police.

11 Q. I see. I appreciate this is a long time ago.

12 A. It is a long time ago and I find it difficult to

13 distinguish between what I knew at the time and what

14 I have learned since, largely through what appeared in

15 the press.

16 Q. Quite so. Remembering as best you can what you know,

17 you've said that you then learnt during the summer

18 holidays of abuse?

19 A. Yes. During the holiday I was invited by the parents to

20 their house for lunch, which was not unusual. Then it

21 was some time that John's father told me that it was

22 more than just a sleeping pill.

23 Q. All right.

24 A. But I don't remember him mentioning the word "abuse",

25 but it was clearly more serious than I had imagined.

1 Q. And I think the issue that you do remember is that what
2 was really the focus was this teacher must not teach
3 again?

4 A. John's father, who I knew quite well, said to me he'd
5 been assured that Derek Jones would not teach again and
6 that he was content to leave the matter closed.

7 Q. On that matter we've heard of List 99. Does that mean
8 anything to you?

9 A. I've heard of it. I've never seen it. My belief is
10 that it was a list produced by someone upon which names
11 of teachers were placed who were not to be taken on for
12 a variety of reasons. I don't think it was just abuse,
13 I think it was incompetence and everything else.

14 Q. All right, but you would understand, working in the
15 teaching world, that there was a list of people who
16 should not be used?

17 A. I believe that is the case, but I don't know exactly
18 what List 99 consisted of, where it was stored, who
19 organised it.

20 Q. Whatever the mechanics, you understood from your
21 conversation with John's father that steps had been
22 taken to ensure he wouldn't teach again?

23 A. That is my understanding.

24 Q. And those steps would be taken by whom, did you
25 understand?

1 A. I'm afraid I didn't think by whom. I just assumed that
2 it would be by the headmaster or the governors.

3 Q. Thank you. But against the background of the family
4 atmosphere that you describe and obviously relished, was
5 this not a hammer blow to the idyllic picture you had of
6 Aberlour?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And what was the result of that? What changed?

9 A. I would say there was just a general -- an increased
10 awareness. Yes. I think it was just a shock to the
11 system.

12 Q. But were there not profound changes brought in because
13 of this discovery? Or was it just assumed it was
14 a one-off?

15 A. There was a greater separation of boarding and teaching
16 staff.

17 Q. And what did that mean in practice?

18 A. In practice it meant that the staff on duty did not do
19 supervision of the pupils in the evenings. I think also
20 they didn't do the early morning rising, runs and so on.

21 Q. Who did take over?

22 A. Sorry?

23 Q. Who took over those roles?

24 A. The appointed house staff and the housemaster and
25 matrons.

1 Q. Were any steps taken to make sure that they were proper
2 for that job?

3 A. References were taken, I'm sure, and ... I'm sorry,
4 again I find it difficult to answer and be specific.

5 Q. All right. But I think what you do also remember is,
6 having talked about Derek Jones, you were asked about
7 another teacher who suddenly left the school around the
8 same time, Mr KME

9 A. That was not about the same time.

10 Q. When was that?

11 A. Much, much earlier. Early 1970s.

12 Q. So you think that was in the 70s, thank you.

13 A. I'm fairly certain it was in the early 70s.

14 Q. Thank you very much indeed. Do you remember why he
15 left?

16 A. As I understood it at the time it was an incident and
17 what incident the was I do not know and I haven't been
18 told since.

19 Q. In a small family community, were you surprised at not
20 being told?

21 A. Not necessarily. What my feeling at the time was that
22 he was beginning to get a bit too big for his boots for
23 want of a better word.

24 Q. Do you remember any other teachers leaving in the early
25 1970s?

1 A. No.

2 Q. I appreciate we're now going back almost 50 years, but
3 if we have evidence of a pupil recollecting that at
4 least three members of staff left for inappropriate
5 behaviour reasons, is that something you can help us
6 with?

7 A. I'm afraid not. I have no idea what is being referring
8 to.

9 Q. All right.

10 A. I can't imagine the circumstances of when or whom.

11 Q. Thank you. Do you remember any other staff, this time
12 perhaps thinking to the 1980s and mid 1980s, leaving
13 suddenly?

14 A. I think I know who you're referring to and the answer is
15 no, I didn't -- I wasn't aware that he had left for any
16 particular reason.

17 Q. All right. Thank you. The reason I ask is, and this is
18 a general question rather than about a specific
19 individual, in this small community which is, from what
20 you're saying, quite tight, people leaving suddenly must
21 have been a surprise?

22 A. Yes, but people did not normally leave suddenly. There
23 were people who came and maybe found life at the school
24 too demanding and left. There were people who came and
25 left in the normal run of things, for a variety of

1 reasons. Apart from the incidents you've just
2 mentioned, I don't remember anybody leaving suddenly.

3 Q. All right. But what we can say is it's really only in,
4 I think, 1990, just before you take on the de facto role
5 as headmaster for a year, that abuse is spoken about,
6 however opaquely, and at that point might have been seen
7 as an issue as far as you understood things?

8 A. I'm sorry, could you repeat that one?

9 Q. Yes, it was a long question, I'm sorry. In 1990 you
10 took over, I think, as head for a year.

11 A. Yes. The end of 1990.

12 Q. Into 1991.

13 A. Yes. I was acting headmaster for the whole of 1991.

14 Q. Yes. And it's just before that happens that we have the
15 episode with John Findlay?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. And from your perspective, that is the first time, from
18 what you've been telling us, that abuse or the potential
19 for it enters your thinking?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Did things change further once a new headmaster was
22 appointed in terms of child protection?

23 A. I would say yes.

24 Q. What changed?

25 A. I'm not sure it was a sudden change, a gradual change,

1 or greater awareness and looking -- looking out for
2 things.

3 Q. Were roles more defined?

4 A. I would say yes. But I couldn't give you a specific
5 instance.

6 Q. I think you've talked already, obviously, about
7 supervision at night-time moving from teaching staff to
8 support staff?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. That's one example. Can you think of others?

11 A. I'm sorry, off the top of my head at short notice
12 I can't.

13 Q. All right. But I think as you say at paragraph 110 on
14 page 20 of your statement:

15 "Unfortunately I believe this contributed to the
16 school's loss of something that I find difficult to put
17 into words."

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And you go on to say:

20 "In the early years if something needed doing, you
21 did it."

22 And you've already alluded to that. It was you had
23 a goal and you would achieve that essentially by
24 whatever was required?

25 A. Yes. If there was -- I mean, to take just one simple

1 example, there was a case with one of the pupils'
2 lavatories and the pan was blocked beyond all reason and
3 it needed urgent attention, and in many schools it would
4 be a case of: okay, put "closed" on the door and send
5 for the janitor, but the headmaster and I sorted it out
6 between us and it was done and it was back in action
7 again in minutes. Well, quite a few minutes.

8 If something like that needed doing and you saw
9 something, you didn't shelve it to somebody else or
10 postpone it, you just got on with it and did it.

11 Q. But the changes that took place from the 1990s on meant
12 that some of that was lost and you think that a bad
13 thing?

14 A. I'm not sure if it was a bad thing, but I think it
15 probably delayed certain things that needed doing being
16 done.

17 Q. Well, to take that on, certain things that needed doing
18 weren't done perhaps as quickly as they might have been,
19 what are you thinking of?

20 A. Oh, I'm sorry, I can't give you a particular instance
21 straight away. I'd need time to think about it.

22 Q. I think in paragraph 111 you say:

23 "I can see now that clear regularly updated school
24 policy documents on many issues would have been a good
25 idea."

1 A. Yes. I think they would. And I'm sure that some were
2 developed. I do remember a bullying policy although
3 bullying was not an issue.
4 So I'm sure there were others but I just don't
5 remember them.
6 Q. But do you now accept that, looking back, it would have
7 been better to have policies in place?
8 A. I think -- I mean, I've had to write policies for all
9 sorts of things since I left teaching. I think
10 established written policies, updated regularly, all
11 manner of things are probably a very good idea.
12 Q. And that should translate to schools too?
13 A. I would say so.
14 Q. Looking back to the Aberlour that obviously you remember
15 with fondness, would you accept that the regime was
16 somewhat naive?
17 A. I think that would be true.
18 Q. That you should have been looking for things but because
19 of assumption didn't?
20 A. I'm not sure about looking for things, but I think
21 possibly -- it just never entered the thinking.
22 Q. Okay. But would you accept these are things that should
23 be thought about?
24 A. Yes.
25 Q. One final thing, David. You were given, I think, one

1 document to look at in addition to your statement and
2 this is GOR-4678, which is a copy of the school
3 magazine, The Unicorn, from 1980.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Obviously you still had a long way to go with your
6 career at Aberlour, but I think if we go to page 3 we
7 see you were being interviewed for the magazine as
8 a member of staff?

9 A. I was, yes.

10 Q. And I think, as you recall it, this is in part because
11 this was an English exercise for the pupils?

12 A. As far as I can remember, it was an exercise for pupils
13 where groups of pupils interviewed if not all then
14 certainly several members of staff.

15 Q. Thank you. I think if we go to page 4, question 7 is:
16 "What advantages do you think a boarding school has
17 over a day school or vice versa?"

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And looking at your answer as it relates to Aberlour and
20 Gordonstoun, I think, four lines from the bottom of the
21 first paragraph, you say:

22 "I think that Aberlour House, Gordonstoun and
23 similar schools offer more opportunity for outdoor
24 activity, projects and for developing any special
25 talents of the individual. Furthermore, I think these

1 schools off a better opportunity for learning how to
2 play an active and useful part in the life of
3 a community."

4 Do you still think that's the case?

5 A. Yes. Possibly more so now than I did when I wrote it.

6 Well, in fact I didn't write it, but I -- the pupil
7 wrote it from what I said. Yes, I believe that very
8 firmly.

9 Q. Although you would now accept that Aberlour was lacking,
10 perhaps, in some of the supervisory elements that we've
11 just discussed?

12 A. I have to say yes.

13 Q. If we look back to page 3 and question 5, you were
14 asked:

15 "What book have you enjoyed reading most and why?"

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Is this an answer that you wrote or is this the pupil?

18 A. I vaguely remember the question and I was struggling.
19 Having been brought up on Enid Blyton's Famous Five and
20 Biggles and things, my reading of fiction from that
21 point onwards was sadly lacking because I spent so much
22 time reading reference works on history and coinage and
23 natural history and so on.

24 But I do remember reading Lord of the Flies and
25 I felt it a most -- what shall we say --

1 thought-provoking book.

2 Q. It's just the last line says:

3 "I find myself identifying all my acquaintances with

4 the various characters in the book."

5 A. Probably an exaggeration. I wouldn't say all my

6 acquaintances. I think when I read it I was either at

7 teacher training or in -- at university.

8 Q. So you're not referring to your acquaintances at

9 Aberlour?

10 A. No, definitely not.

11 MR BROWN: No. Thank you. David, I have no further

12 questions for you. Thank you very much indeed.

13 LADY SMITH: Are there any outstanding applications for

14 questions?

15 David, that does complete all the questions we have

16 for you today. Thank you so much for engaging with us

17 and doing so so diligently when we're asking you to draw

18 on a long memory of your professional life at Aberlour

19 and the Gordonstoun family of schools. I'm really

20 grateful to you for doing that and it's been enormously

21 helpful to me to hear from you. But I'm now able to let

22 you go and get about the rest of your day. I hope

23 you're able to have a peaceful, restful afternoon.

24 I think you've earned it. Thank you.

25 A. Thank you, Lady Smith.

1 (The witness withdrew)

2 LADY SMITH: Yes, Mr Brown.

3 MR BROWN: My Lady, we have another witness at 2 o'clock.

4 LADY SMITH: 2 o'clock for the next witness, thank you.

5 I'll rise now until the next witness at 2.00.

6 (1.00 pm)

7 (The luncheon adjournment)

8 (2.00 pm)

9 LADY SMITH: Good afternoon. Mr Brown, I understand the

10 next witness is ready for us; is that right?

11 MR BROWN: He is. The next witness, my Lady, is Andrew Keir

12 and I just remind Your Ladyship that there may be

13 elements in this evidence that would require him to be

14 warned.

15 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

16 Andrew Keir (affirmed)

17 LADY SMITH: Could we begin by my finding out whether you

18 would like me to call you Mr Keir or Andrew?

19 A. Mr Keir, please, ma'am. My Lady.

20 LADY SMITH: Mr Keir, I think I'm going to have to ask you

21 to take your mask off. It's because of hearing you.

22 The alternative is I'm going to have to keep asking you

23 to repeat yourself. If you could do that, that would be

24 really helpful.

25 A. Okay, my Lady. I come from a medical family and we're

1 a bit cautious about ...

2 LADY SMITH: I fully appreciate that. I hope you appreciate

3 we've been rigorous about distancing in here and

4 cleanliness.

5 A. That's very clear, yes.

6 LADY SMITH: You have sanitiser on the desk and wipes, and

7 I hope that helps you.

8 A. Thank you, my Lady.

9 LADY SMITH: I'm not expecting you to be any closer to

10 anybody than you are at the moment, Mr Keir.

11 The way things work, I will be handing over to

12 Mr Brown in a moment to invite you to give your

13 evidence. You've got the statement that you provided us

14 with in front of you in the folder. You'll also see

15 your statement coming up on the screen. Use either as

16 is suitable for you, or if you don't want to look at the

17 statement you don't have to, it's very much your choice.

18 Generally, please let me help you to be as

19 comfortable as you can. If you need breaks, if you're

20 not sure about anything, do ask. If it works for you,

21 it will work for me -- apart from the mask, I'm sorry,

22 I'll hear you better without it.

23 A. That's fine, my Lady. Thank you.

24 LADY SMITH: One final thing. You'll be aware that you may

25 be asked questions by Mr Brown in the course of your

1 evidence that you feel could lead you to incriminate
2 yourself. Although this isn't a court by any means,
3 it's not a court, it's an Inquiry hearing, you have all
4 the privileges that you would have in a courtroom and
5 you're not obliged to answer any question that would
6 incriminate you in any way.

7 Any doubts about that, check and we can deal with it
8 as and when they arise, but I wanted to let you know
9 that right at the outset in the hope that would be
10 helpful.

11 A. Thank you, my Lady.

12 LADY SMITH: Mr Brown, when you're ready. I take it,
13 Mr Keir, you're ready now for your evidence to start.
14 Thank you.

15 Questions from Mr Brown

16 MR BROWN: Thank you, my Lady.

17 Mr Keir, good afternoon.

18 A. Sir.

19 Q. As her Ladyship has just said, you have the statement in
20 the folder in front of you, it's on the screen. I know
21 you have brought in your own documentation and if you
22 feel the need to refer to that, please do.

23 If we could begin with the statement, though, you
24 can see that this is a document that runs to 14 pages.
25 Is that correct?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And on the final page we see that you have signed and
3 dated the statement and that was on 10 February this
4 year.

5 A. That is correct.

6 Q. And the last numbered paragraph, 69, reads:
7 "I have no objection to my witness statement being
8 published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry.
9 I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are
10 true."

11 A. That is correct.

12 Q. And just so we are clear, the process of finalising that
13 statement to the point of signature would involve the
14 Inquiry contacting you, an exchange of questions,
15 answers being provided, a draft statement being analysed
16 by you, any corrections put in place, and then the final
17 version being sent to you for signature; is that
18 correct?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And can we take it that, having signed it, you had read
21 through it and were content with it?

22 A. Indeed, I stand by this.

23 Q. Thank you very much indeed.

24 That being so, some of the detail we don't need to
25 go into because your statement is now in evidence, but

1 I would like to ask you a number of questions relating
2 to your experience as a teacher and then obviously some
3 particular episodes that we will come to in due course.
4 You understand?

5 A. (Witness nods).

6 Q. You're now 71?

7 A. That is correct.

8 Q. And after university you went through teacher training
9 and started as a physics teacher, I think, in 1973?

10 A. 73 or 74. Sitting here right now, I'm not totally sure.

11 Q. No. I think your statement at paragraph 3 says from
12 1973 until 1983.

13 A. The dates in the statement would be correct. I should
14 have referred to that. I was just using my brain for
15 a second and that was a mistake.

16 Q. Don't worry. It is not a memory test. We're talking
17 about events, obviously, decades ago. But the broad
18 point is your entire career was in teaching?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Starting at Barnard Castle School and then moving to
21 Gordonstoun, which is the focus of our particular
22 interest?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. And you were at Gordonstoun, I think, between 83 and 94?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And then you moved on to a number of other schools,
2 which are detailed in the statement?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. I think you stopped teaching in 2012 after a period of
5 part-time work?

6 A. That's correct.

7 Q. So, broadly speaking, 40 years in teaching?

8 A. (Gestures).

9 Q. In that period of 40 years, presumably the world as
10 a feature changed as time passed. Was there greater
11 focus, as your career progressed, in matters of child
12 welfare as compared with when you started?

13 A. That's a very broad question. I'll do my best to answer
14 it fully. Yes, there was, and expectations changed too.
15 If I may give one example, when I started teaching, it
16 came as quite a shock to me to find out that there was
17 one changing room for pupils and staff together, and
18 that was the procedure at Barnard Castle School and at
19 Gordonstoun. Since then, things have been changed and
20 staff would change now in one place and pupils in
21 another. But that's one way in which things have
22 improved considerably.

23 Q. We heard evidence, I think, that in the Gordonstoun
24 swimming pool there was a separate shower for staff; is
25 that correct?

1 A. Not in my time.

2 Q. Not in your time.

3 A. There was -- I have been told -- this is reported speech
4 only.

5 Q. Yes.

6 A. I have been told that there's been considerable
7 reworking of the gym and swimming pool area since I was
8 employed there. But when it started, I'm not totally
9 sure there was even a female area. I have a vague
10 memory that the girls would come pre-changed to the gym
11 area. But don't quote me on that. That's just what my
12 memory tells me and sometimes that's a lying jade.

13 Q. Looking then particularly at Gordonstoun, you spent ten
14 years at Barnard Castle, why did you want to move to
15 Gordonstoun?

16 A. Well, I had spent ten years at Barnard Castle and it was
17 then part of one's -- what's a good phrase? -- way of
18 working that one didn't stay at a school for life.
19 Mr Chips is dead and buried. And after a few years, one
20 had done all one could. I started a radio club at
21 Barnard Castle which became fairly successful.
22 I started a sailing club at Barnard Castle which became
23 fairly successful. So things went well, but there comes
24 a time when you've done what you can there and there's
25 a danger of becoming a bored teacher, and that's a very

1 bad thing because as soon as somebody starts saying,
2 "Okay, get your books out, we're going to study chapter
3 13 today", then the children are not being best taught.
4 Personal opinion only.

5 Q. Yes. But you chose to go to Gordonstoun?
6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Was that in response to seeing an advert for a position?
8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And in terms of the process we understand from your
10 statement you were interviewed by the headmaster?
11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Mr Mavor?
13 A. Yes.

14 Q. You presume your references were taken up?
15 A. They were never referred to, I was never questioned
16 about them. I could only assume, though, it would be
17 perfectly good practice.

18 Q. Indeed. And you were successful and you start at
19 Gordonstoun?
20 A. Yes.

21 Q. There was no probationary period?
22 A. I'm not aware of any. Obviously as a new member of
23 staff people will be judging the cut of my jib, but
24 I was never told, "You have three months until
25 something", a change of state or anything like that.

1 Q. Is that something that developed in teaching
2 broadly later on?

3 A. I would expect so. I was never even -- as a newly
4 qualified teacher I was never even officially on
5 probation at Barnard Castle. It was just a position of:
6 you know the job because you've just been trained to it,
7 we will try to help you, we will be here if you want us,
8 but otherwise there are the children and there is your
9 laboratory, get on with it.

10 Q. Gordonstoun, obviously, is much more than just teaching
11 in a laboratory.

12 A. Oh yes.

13 Q. Was that novel to you when you started?

14 A. It was a step further forward from what I had managed to
15 achieve in Barnard Castle. Barnard Castle for some was
16 a classroom and the staffroom. I preferred to be going
17 out and doing things. I started doing my judo just for
18 my own interest then. I passed the radio ham qualifying
19 exam and was told by one of the students, "I'm
20 interested in that, Mr Keir, you're a teacher, please
21 teach me", and that started me in the way of having --
22 I'd never thought of having a radio club, but this
23 particular youngster was interested in it and said,
24 "I want to learn, you've just learnt, that makes you the
25 best teacher, you're supposed to be a physics teacher

1 anyway, and electronics/physics."

2 Q. Can I just be clear, was Barnard Castle boarding or day?

3 A. Both.

4 Q. Both. Did you have housemaster duties at Barnard

5 Castle?

6 A. No.

7 Q. Should we understand then that you are essentially a day

8 teacher but you introduced the radio ham club, judo,

9 sailing off your own bat?

10 A. I started them without requests. The headmaster didn't

11 come along and say, "Mr Keir, I want you to run the ..."

12 but at -- Barnard Castle was both a day and a boarding

13 school. I was offered and accepted a deal for myself

14 which involved me having a room in the school and the

15 downside of that was I had to do evening duty and walk

16 around prep and things from time to time. Take my turn

17 on that. That had me living in the school and then it

18 was -- became possible to offer to take some of the

19 youngsters sailing and such like.

20 Q. These additional class, judo, radio ham, sailing, they

21 were your ideas?

22 A. No, the radio ham was the child's idea actually, I was

23 never planning to run that but it worked, so don't argue

24 with what works. The sailing I was interested in

25 because I've been sailing since I was knee high to

1 a short sheep, and the judo was actually started by the
2 school. They brought in an instructor and I thought I'd
3 give it a try, several of the staff gave it a try.
4 I just stayed on a bit longer than the rest of them did.
5 Q. And you were happy to give your time, your free time,
6 with these extracurricular activities?
7 A. Yes. I enjoyed doing the judo, for instance, so it was
8 no shakes to me if there were youngsters there.
9 I wasn't the instructor then, I'd only got myself up to
10 blue belt by the time I left and that's by no means
11 an instructor belt.
12 Q. Instructor came later, did it?
13 A. Yes, indeed.
14 Q. You were a single man at this stage?
15 A. Yes.
16 Q. And had you intended to live in or was that just --
17 A. I accepted the deal when it was offered. It was a very
18 good deal for money's sake in that, to be honest, I'm
19 not sure if they were even offering a living-out deal.
20 They rather took it for granted that I would prefer to
21 live in and I was quite happy to take the deal they
22 offered. It was a good wee school and the youngsters
23 were mostly farmers' sons and Forces' sons. There was
24 a tendency for a class to arrive and sit down and go,
25 "Right, we're here, now come on, teach". The atmosphere

1 was very good there.

2 Q. Thank you. Moving back to Gordonstoun then --

3 A. Sorry --

4 Q. No, no, not at all. I was asking you about Barnard

5 Castle. I'm now asking you about Gordonstoun. When you

6 moved to Gordonstoun, though, I would understand from

7 your statement that you became involved in the house

8 operation. You were an assistant housemaster?

9 A. Again, the job that was offered to me was assistant --

10 well, part of it was being an assistant housemaster.

11 The job specification was officially teaching physics

12 with house duties.

13 Q. That is not something perhaps you have formally done

14 before, albeit as Barnard Castle you had

15 responsibilities?

16 A. Indeed. It was a step further on, yes.

17 Q. Did you receive any training to be an assistant

18 housemaster?

19 A. I was briefed what the job would be and the housemaster

20 himself was very helpful and spent a lot of time with me

21 in the first term or so talking me through and

22 accompanying me through my duties, and he was always

23 around. You know the second adult rule? He operated

24 that.

25 Q. The second adult rule: there must be two adults present?

1 A. Not necessarily must be two adults present, but there
2 must be the incipient possibility of a second adult
3 coming through the door right now, which was very --
4 I found that calming and effective.

5 Q. I see. Had that been present in Barnard Castle?

6 A. Not specifically, but because the three boarding houses
7 were under one roof, effectively it was there because
8 the various house staff visited each other and people
9 dropped in for a glass of sherry, for those who took
10 sherry, and it was quite collegial, to be honest.

11 Q. Thank you. We obviously know quite a lot about
12 Gordonstoun already and would understand that it
13 operated a number of boys' houses and fewer girls'
14 houses. You were in which house?

15 A. Duffus.

16 Q. And did you remain in that house for your time at
17 Gordonstoun?

18 A. No. When my head of -- housemaster left, another was
19 appointed whose name escapes me, I'm afraid. I didn't
20 get on well with him. His dog bit me, for one thing.
21 And it was then agreed mutually between myself and the
22 then headmaster that it was time for me to move out and
23 let somebody else become the resident house tutor.
24 I was then asked by one of the housemasters to be
25 a non-resident house tutor and take my turns doing

1 evening duty and such like in his house.

2 Q. But I think from what you tell us in the statement,

3 between September 1983 and July 1991, you lived in

4 Duffus House?

5 A. Yes, but not for my entire time at Gordonstoun.

6 Q. No, no. After July 1991, you had a private house?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Perhaps a mile from the school?

9 A. About that.

10 Q. We've heard that the houses operated in a fairly

11 autonomous way. Is that a description you recognise?

12 A. I'm not sure that's the word I would choose.

13 Q. What word would you choose?

14 A. That's the trouble, I'm not sure I've got a better word,

15 I'm just not sure that's the word I would choose. I'd

16 have to sit down and think before I tried to opine. For

17 one thing -- maybe you have a point, because I was

18 sufficiently busy in Duffus never to have much of

19 a chance to visit any of the other houses, and it was

20 not normal -- in Barnard Castle it was quite possible

21 for the head of one house to visit the other house just

22 on a drop-in basis. That wouldn't have happened at

23 Gordonstoun. Not during my time in Duffus House,

24 anyway.

25 Q. Thank you. Should we understand that the culture of the

1 different houses varied from one house to the other and
2 really depended on the character and approach of the
3 housemaster or housemistress?

4 A. For the same reason that you're asking that question
5 I find it difficult to answer because I only really know
6 Duffus House. One heard boys from other houses
7 complaining about how tough life was there and I'm sure
8 the Duffus House boys would complain to their friends in
9 other houses how tough life was with us, but I never
10 spent any time in any other house, apart from in Bruce
11 House later on when I was the visiting tutor there, so
12 I'm not aware of differences, but that's because
13 I wasn't in a position to observe them, not -- just
14 because I didn't know they were there doesn't mean they
15 weren't there. Absence of evidence isn't evidence of
16 absence, that's the phrase I'm looking for, yes.

17 Q. Thank you. But from what you've just said, it would be
18 understood, for example, that some houses were perceived
19 as tougher than others. Whether that's right or not you
20 don't know, but that was perhaps the common
21 understanding?

22 A. I can't answer that because no child ever came up to me
23 and said, "I'm in X house and it's terrible there."

24 Q. Though you did hear complaints about particular houses?

25 A. Oh yes, there are always complaints, but ... a small

1 pinch of salt.

2 Q. You've talked about the two-man rule. Presumably that

3 obviously doesn't apply in some situations because it

4 can't. The classroom, in a sense, that's you and the

5 students?

6 A. Oh, my word, no.

7 Q. No?

8 A. For one thing, the lab tech could and did walk in at any

9 time. Whether if there's a class running or not. If

10 the lab tech felt that there was a need of some kit or

11 it was needed to be taken out, he/she would just do it

12 and you just learnt to paint round that. And the

13 children were very good about that. There was never

14 a sort of a, "Great, we've got an interruption, we can

15 all slack off for the next two minutes". Likewise, from

16 time to time another teacher would come into my lab

17 while I was teaching. That was part of what happened.

18 Q. What about the various clubs? The radio hamming club,

19 for example, would that be just you and the members of

20 the radio ham club?

21 A. Most of the time the radio ham club was in my study in

22 Duffus. Quite a few of the lads were from Duffus and

23 the others were allowed to visit if they were coming to

24 my room, because my room had -- the door was open during

25 term time as part of the business of being in there,

1 that anybody could come at any time to ask for anything.

2 Q. The sailing club?

3 A. That was down by the harbour and as a general rule the

4 sailing -- the sailing at Gordonstoun was sea sailing

5 and you really needed two staff there because one would

6 be coaching in a boat and the other one would be running

7 the rescue boat. So that's -- the difference there, at

8 Barnard Castle I took some people to the local sailing

9 club who provided a rescue boat.

10 Q. Was there a canoe club?

11 A. Yes. I can't remember exactly which sort -- it was

12 mostly sea canoeing they did but there was also some, as

13 I learnt to my cost, river canoeing, because I tried

14 that once and ended up in the San. I knew I was ill

15 because I found myself saying, "Yes, I want to go to the

16 San."

17 Q. Would the canoe club operate out of the swimming pool at

18 times for practice?

19 A. The canoe club went to the swimming pool from time to

20 time. The swimming pool was under siege, generally it

21 was in a lot of use, but people who wanted to practice

22 their Eskimo rolls and such like, you either had the

23 very beginners learning which end of the paddle to hold

24 or alternatively people who wanted to try up to and

25 including a no paddle hands-only Eskimo roll, so from

1 the experts down to the raw beginners would use the pool
2 as a place to practice.

3 Q. What about the judo club, where did that take place?

4 A. That was mostly in the gym. We had the visit --
5 I trained with the town Elgin judo club as well and we
6 had quite a nice procedure that they would come and
7 visit us from time to time and then I would take our lot
8 and we would go and visit them, which made it -- made
9 for a good atmosphere because you learn everybody's
10 tricks after a while, if there's only four or five
11 people, you know he's going to do this so are prepared
12 for it, but in competition you want to prepare for
13 anything that's going to happen.

14 Q. But these are opportunities for you to be more involved
15 with smaller numbers of pupil than the classroom
16 scenario, I take it?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. How many boys would be going to these clubs? The radio
19 ham club, for example?

20 A. The radio ham club would vary from three or four at one
21 end -- you couldn't really get more than about eight or
22 nine. They would be leaning against the walls all over
23 the place. But it very much varied. For one thing
24 through the years sometimes you had only a few people
25 interested and then at another time half a does people

1 would be trying to get their licences and such like.

2 Q. Did you encourage people to join any of these clubs?

3 A. If they wanted to. I didn't go around beating a big

4 drum about it, but word gets out and people come and

5 knock on your door and say, "Mr Keir, can I try for

6 this?" and if I reckoned they were serious about it, I'd

7 say yes.

8 Q. Would you ever encourage a given boy who you've seen,

9 for example, might be somewhat isolated, "Why not try

10 this"?

11 A. I'd be shy of telling a youngster what he ought to be

12 wanting, because for one thing, there's usually plenty

13 of interest going, and so we weren't short of visitors,

14 and the other one was I'm not sure if it's my place to

15 tell a youngster what his enthusiasms are.

16 Q. Well, as an assistant housemaster, is one of your roles

17 not to perform a pastoral function to look out for

18 pupils who are perhaps, for the sake of argument,

19 isolated, not perhaps surrounded by friends, and to

20 encourage them to try something new?

21 A. But you have to be so careful with that because it's the

22 kiss of death for a youngster to be perceived as

23 teacher's pet. It really is a bad thing.

24 Q. Presumably as a teacher of many years' experience,

25 that's something you're alive to and can cope with?

1 A. But can the child cope with it?

2 Q. I'm asking could you cope with that? Is that something

3 you would try to do subtly?

4 A. I would try to be aware and helpful for a youngster

5 who's having a bad time, but it would be a very bad

6 thing for them to feel they were leaning on me because

7 they have -- it sounds harsh, sir, but they have to help

8 themselves to some extent.

9 Q. To some extent, sure, but is your function, thinking of

10 the pastoral role of an assistant housemaster, not to

11 help students?

12 A. Indeed to help students and to make sure I help them in

13 a way which is helpful.

14 Q. We've heard that Gordonstoun had a very outward bound --

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. -- view of the world, and presumably that suited many

17 children well, but suited other children not at all?

18 A. I've known youngsters have considerable difficulty with

19 that, yes.

20 Q. And would you be alive to those youngsters because of

21 that difficulty?

22 A. I do remember one youngster who was being impelled into

23 experience, as the phrase was, who was supposed to be

24 learning to canoe surf and could hardly canoe at all and

25 I took a one-man decision and told him to just get his

1 canoe back on the rack and go and sit in the shed
2 because he was half drowning out there, he was having no
3 fun at all. He was very slightly built and the waves
4 were quite big and I was feeling this was dangerous.
5 I don't want to sound like I'm criticising the people
6 who were running that particular expedition, but there
7 comes a time when you tell a youngster, "You've tried
8 hard enough now."

9 Q. So there were children who were out of the mainstream,
10 if I can put it that way?

11 A. I'm sorry, I don't want to sound like I'm being stupid,
12 but I don't understand that question.

13 Q. Well, you've agreed that Gordonstoun is very much
14 an outward bound school, one where self-reliance is
15 expected, where perhaps a confident child would do well
16 instinctively.

17 A. Okay. To a certain extent I would say a confident child
18 has been blessed that they will do well wherever they go
19 because confidence breeds success. We did have
20 youngsters who found some of the activities harder than
21 others, but mostly we were able to encourage them to see
22 it as a way to get through things. I don't think we
23 ever set up a child to fail.

24 Q. But thinking of an introverted, shy child, presumably,
25 would they stand out to you as a teacher?

1 A. Very much so, but I come back to what I said before,
2 that it would be the kiss of death for the child to be
3 seen as teacher's pet. You have to be so subtle about
4 things just to have the occasional quiet word, better
5 still have a word with their tutor, who would be seeing
6 them weekly.

7 Q. Did you ever do that, have a quiet word with such
8 children?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Did you try and encourage them?

11 A. I tried to help them because, strangely enough, I was
12 a bit of a quiet one myself when I was at school and I'd
13 learnt some of the ways of avoiding the more obvious
14 unhappy feelings.

15 Q. And was that something, given your own experience, you
16 brought to bear helpfully for some of the children once
17 you were a teacher?

18 A. You've used the word "helpfully". Again, I don't want
19 to sound like I'm being silly but I can't be the judge
20 of that, whether I was helpful or not. I tried but
21 I can't say whether I was.

22 Q. Your intent would be to help them?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Because you knew what it was like, from what you've just
25 said, to be --

1 A. Yes, indeed, I'd be a pretty poor teacher if I didn't
2 try to help the ones who were struggling, but one has to
3 be careful.

4 Q. Indeed so. So presumably would you try to speak to them
5 outwith the glare of other people and publicity; in
6 other words one to one?

7 A. Right, I think I'd better explain about my study in
8 Gordonstoun there. It jutted onto a corridor with boys'
9 bedrooms and things on it -- there's a name for it --
10 dormitories, thanks. Sorry, brain is only partially at
11 home. And therefore as the house went about its
12 business through the day, youngsters would come and ask
13 for this and that and because there was a sea of boys
14 coming in and going out, it was perfectly possible for
15 a lad to drop in and wait until it was quiet and have
16 a quiet chat. Especially if he chose when to come,
17 which was the best thing. I don't think I ever had to
18 tell a youngster, "You will see me in my study at 5.30"
19 or whatever it was. That would be severely
20 heavy-handed.

21 Q. Would you give them a time when they might find it quiet
22 to come and speak to you?

23 A. There were no such quiet times unless it was in prep or
24 something like that, in which case they would have been
25 in prep and it would have been bad because they would

1 have been seen leaving prep to come away and again they
2 would be -- you can mark them out quite horribly by
3 calling them to be seen.

4 I don't know if I'm making myself clear, but
5 a youngster who's called by a teacher to be seen,
6 they're being shown as separate just by that one action
7 alone and that's just what you don't want to do.

8 So as a general routine, they would come to me at
9 a time when the place was busy and we would wait until
10 it was a little bit quieter before we had a quiet chat.
11 But the room is from myself to these ladies square. So
12 it wasn't exactly huge.

13 Q. Was it ever brought to your attention that concerns had
14 been raised about how friendly you were to children?

15 A. That was never said or hinted at, no.

16 Q. But I think, as you do tell us at paragraph 31, the
17 school [REDACTED] was the first official point of contact
18 for a child with problems?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Children were also encouraged to see their tutors?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. So there was obviously provision to go and speak to
23 teachers irrespective of not, perhaps, wanting to be
24 seen by the student body talking one-to-one. The scope
25 to do that existed?

1 A. Oh yes. But I would never call a child out to do that.
2 It would be up to the child to come and see me.

3 Q. I see. So if we've heard, for example, that meetings
4 were suggested by you with individual pupils, for
5 example, "Why don't you come to play a computer game"?

6 A. Well, there was a computer in my study, but it was one
7 I built myself from a kit in 1981 and it really wasn't
8 very effective.

9 Q. Did you ever invite pupils to come and play games on
10 your computer?

11 A. Only at a time when other youngsters were around.

12 Q. Did you ever have individual pupils using your computer
13 with just you present?

14 A. I don't think so, but we're looking at a time of eight
15 years with people whizzing in and out the door. I come
16 back to the concept of the door to that room was left
17 open during term time. I was told -- part of my initial
18 briefing was: you do not close that door during term
19 time. To make the room available to people. It was
20 never, "Come into my parlour" said the spider to the
21 fly.

22 Q. Presumably there were times, however, when you were not
23 on duty and responsibility fell on someone else?

24 A. Yes, but there was an inner door. Sorry, if I can just
25 sketch, there's the corridor, there's my room, and then

1 there's an inner door to where I can be, but if I was
2 off duty, then the -- then no one would be coming if
3 I was off duty and someone else was on duty. Unless
4 a youngster wanted a word with me or something like
5 that.

6 Q. Or if, for example, you'd said, "Why don't you come
7 along and play a computer game, I'm off duty"?

8 A. Well, mostly when I was off duty I'd be doing things
9 like going into Elgin for the judo training and things
10 like that. The headmaster, Mr Mavor, was very
11 particular in saying staff should get out and do things
12 in the community. I didn't spend -- there comes a time
13 where if you're off duty, you'd maybe like to have
14 privacy, quiet and peace, not bringing youngsters in.

15 Q. No doubt, but the scope was there, should you have
16 wanted to?

17 A. I suppose I could have, but with great respect, sir,
18 that's not the question you asked.

19 Q. I'll ask it simply: did you ever have pupils one-to-one
20 in your quarters?

21 A. Not that I remember, no. The only time it would have
22 happened was if someone came to me with a problem.
23 I can't remember that happening, but eight years 30-plus
24 years ago, I can't swear to it for one way or the other.

25 Q. Thank you. How live was the potential of child abuse,

1 thinking back to the time you were in Gordonstoun, 1980s
2 to 1990s? Was it the subject of concern amongst the
3 teaching staff?

4 A. No. To be honest, I never heard the phrase -- I never
5 heard much about any worries about anybody. The new
6 headmaster came in when Mr Mavor left and he made -- he
7 set out a new protocol about staff and children keeping
8 each other safe, and at that point there became
9 a written protocol about it, which I can't remember.
10 But I remember that when the new headmaster came in,
11 there was a certain amount of making sure that
12 everything was clean behind the doors.

13 Q. So there was a sea change?

14 A. No, I think he -- he made it more something of which he
15 showed he was very aware. I know that's not grammar.
16 Up until then, I think it had been taken for granted,
17 which is dangerous, I will admit. When Mr -- I've
18 forgotten his name, the man after Mavor --

19 Q. Pyper?

20 A. Thank you. When Mr Pyper came in, as part of reading
21 himself in, he set out his stall to the staff and one of
22 the things he referred to was making sure that not only
23 were the children safe but they were seen to be safe.
24 I'm precising there over many years, but he -- it became
25 something one thought of daily rather than one took for

1 granted. I think that's probably the best way of
2 putting it.

3 Q. Can I ask another question: did you ever think about it
4 prior to him coming in?

5 A. Well, I'd been trained at teacher training college and
6 Barnard Castle was very good about making it clear what
7 could and couldn't be done. For instance, again, it was
8 always the second adult rule there as well, that there
9 was always the possibility, the distinct possibility
10 rather than the one in a million possibility, the
11 distinct possibility that another adult could walk
12 through any door at any time, which we felt at the time
13 was quite effective.

14 Q. But from what you're saying at Gordonstoun, there was
15 simply -- until Pyper came in -- an assumption it would
16 be all right?

17 A. I wouldn't say that. OPK used to drop in
18 on me from time to time and I'd drop in on him from time
19 to time, and of course he was a married man with family
20 and such like.

21 LADY SMITH: Sorry, OPK who?

22 A. OPK , my Lady.

23 MR BROWN: Was he the housemaster?

24 A. He was the housemaster at Duffus, yes. Well, for my
25 first seven, I think it was, years.

1 Q. As a family man, presumably he had his own pressures, to
2 deal with family as well as his charges?

3 A. I'm tempted to say I couldn't possibly comment. His
4 lady wife was also seen around the house, but it being
5 a boys' boarding house, the atmosphere was not one which
6 was totally welcoming of ladies. They did try once to
7 bring a female visiting tutor on site and the boys
8 didn't make life very easy for her. They had their own
9 personal expectations that a tutor in the boys' boarding
10 house would be male.

11 LADY SMITH: In what way did they not make life very easy
12 for her?

13 A. There was a lack of respect, my Lady, including people
14 coming back from the showers and accidentally dropping
15 their towels and such like. That only happened for
16 a very short time. Mr OPK [REDACTED], I think it was, had
17 a strong word with the house at the time, but the boys
18 were not shy about letting their opinions be known.

19 LADY SMITH: In what other ways did they fail to show
20 respect?

21 A. Well, it's situational, my Lady, but as a general
22 routine the students at Gordonstoun did show respect for
23 staff. For instance, if a staff member walked down
24 a corridor, the youngsters I wouldn't say got out of the
25 way, but they didn't hesitate to move -- I can't explain

1 this.

2 LADY SMITH: Don't worry about staff in the corridor,

3 Mr Keir --

4 A. I'm just trying to say you can tell at a glance whether

5 youngsters are showing respect or not, and they just

6 didn't.

7 LADY SMITH: For this woman?

8 A. To this lady, yes. Sorry, I should say woman, but

9 I tend to promote everyone to lady.

10 LADY SMITH: No, no, it's fine.

11 A. It's just a case of -- it was a concept well worth

12 trying, which just unfortunately didn't work very well

13 and the cost of trying it was more than we expected, so

14 I think the lady concerned decided that after a term she

15 would stick to visiting a girls' house.

16 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

17 MR BROWN: Since you mentioned the house, one of the other

18 themes that we may have gathered from evidence already

19 is that the houses were, to some degree at least,

20 self-governing in that discipline was passed down to the

21 senior boys. Is that what you remember too?

22 A. I wouldn't call it discipline, sir. If I wanted to get

23 a youngster who was in a changing room or such like, I'd

24 find a Colour Bearer and ask him to dig him out, because

25 for obvious reasons one didn't go into changing rooms

1 and such like, shower rooms especially. But if
2 a youngster was needed and you wanted him, you'd find
3 a sixth former, preferably a Colour Bearer, and say,
4 "I want a word with [REDACTED], please", and you'd be
5 standing there in an area where everybody could see you.
6 If [REDACTED] needed seeing, then you'd see him.

7 Q. But day-to-day routine, was that not the responsibility
8 of the Colour Bearers, the senior pupils, to marshal and
9 organise the junior pupils in the house?

10 A. I wouldn't go as far as that at all. The Colour Bearers
11 were useful people to help move things along, they were
12 good people to listen to, to establish the mood of the
13 house. They had absolutely no powers of punishment that
14 I'm aware of. I am trying to think how I can helpfully
15 answer your question, but I'm stuck there.

16 Q. No, thank you --

17 A. They definitely had no individual powers of punishment
18 whatsoever that I was ever aware of.

19 Q. No, so if punishment or discipline was required, they
20 would come to you or the housemaster?

21 A. Yes, usually a word was enough because the school tried
22 to avoid confrontational situations, but if they needed
23 to happen, then they needed to happen. I don't remember
24 Duffus House and the Gordonstoun that I saw being
25 confrontational.

1 Q. Is that not in part because it ran well, at least in
2 Duffus House, because people would only ever come to you
3 if it was necessary; for much of the time it ran
4 efficiently itself?

5 A. I'd answer that question in a slightly different way and
6 say as a general routine the boys would know what was
7 expected of them.

8 Q. Yes.

9 A. Definitely for the first year or two while they were on
10 Blue Book, they would be writing up per day what they'd
11 achieved, what they'd done, what they hadn't done, or by
12 implication what they hadn't done, and that would be
13 checked at the end of the week by their tutor.

14 So one of the biggest steps a youngster would be
15 wanting to make would be to get off Blue Book and not
16 have to write up every day, "I did my physics prep,
17 I did my chemistry prep, I did my French prep, I did so
18 much exercise" routine.

19 Q. And once that was achieved, presumably the involvement
20 or the input from the assistant housemaster and the
21 housemaster himself would decline further?

22 A. There would be less paperwork for sure, but
23 OPK and I and whoever was visiting tutors
24 at the time tried to make us -- we tried to be around
25 the place during hours when the youngsters were mobile.

1 So we would take morning run in the morning, which --
2 which to me worked. If I was taking morning run,
3 I would stand, let's say, quarter of a mile from the
4 house and tell a Colour Bearer that I was at
5 such-and-such and the house would run to me, give their
6 name and run back again, and then they could have that
7 shower, morning shower, which avoided all the probing
8 into youngsters bedrooms and such like to say, "You
9 really, really must get up now", I was quarter of a mile
10 away sitting there with a notebook. That seemed to work
11 quite nicely.

12 Q. Would you say you had good relationships with pupils?

13 A. Mostly, yes. There were always one or two people who
14 weren't happy with me, either because they thought I was
15 being too strict with them or because I think they
16 thought I was incompetent for some reason or other, but
17 that's teaching.

18 Q. Did you keep in touch with pupils after they left the
19 school?

20 A. Almost inevitably no.

21 Q. Almost?

22 A. Almost inevitably no. One or two of them wrote to me
23 later on. There was one, I shan't name him unless I'm
24 required to, who had been one of the judo group, he'd
25 been one of the Duffus lads. I got to know him fairly

1 well. He decided he wanted to join a particular part of
2 the army and we'd rather recommended he didn't, and he
3 joined as part of the army and did a part of a tour and
4 then bought himself out and he wrote to say -- I'm
5 patting my own back here, but the hell with it,
6 "Mr Keir, you were right, I shouldn't have joined, I'm
7 just not the sort of person" -- he was a good lad,
8 but --

9 Q. Was he a lad you had a particularly good relationship
10 with?

11 A. Fairly good relationship, yes. He was one of the judo
12 stars who really put his heart into it, for instance,
13 he'd come and train up at Elgin, which not all of them
14 did.

15 Q. So he was one of the group of boys who perhaps engaged
16 with you in particular, radio hamming, as you just said,
17 judo, sailing, presumably there would be boys you would
18 see regularly?

19 A. Well, the sailing was for everybody.

20 Q. Yes.

21 A. You did your --

22 Q. I asked you whether a group of boys that you saw
23 regularly who were part of your circle, if I can put it
24 that way?

25 A. He was one of my tutees, yes.

1 Q. He was more than your tutee, he was part of the judo
2 club and the radio ham?

3 A. I don't know if he ever got his licence. He spent a bit
4 of time with the radio club -- he spent some time with
5 the radio hamming group. I think it was more as
6 an occasional drop-in than a regular.

7 Q. That was one boy who was your tutee, he was involved in
8 a number of the organisations that you ran?

9 A. I -- the -- there only were two that I ran, so a number
10 is -- I'm being querulous here, my apologies. But yes,
11 I knew him moderately well.

12 Q. Would there be a group of boys who you would know
13 particularly well because they had that sort of level of
14 interest in things you were involved with?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. So there's a small group within the wider group of the
17 school who you would see regularly?

18 A. I would see fairly regular, yes. They didn't all arrive
19 at the same time and go somewhere like here come the
20 bears, but yes.

21 Q. So these are the boys you know particularly well because
22 you are their tutor and because or because they come and
23 do things that you organise?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Did they tend to be the shyer boys?

1 A. No, quite a few of them were the more outgoing ones, in
2 fact. Shy boys don't usually start at judo.

3 Q. Did you have ad hoc judo for the shy boys to try and
4 introduce it --

5 A. No.

6 Q. So if we've heard that you would do ad hoc judo --

7 A. No. If I ran a judo club thing, it was known to
8 everybody that it was happening and usually you got the
9 same faces turned out.

10 Q. Indeed.

11 A. Ad hoc is really not how I would describe it.

12 Q. So if we've heard evidence of you having ad hoc judo
13 sessions with pupils, are you saying that is wrong?

14 A. I would have to disagree with them quite strongly.

15 Q. Okay. Obviously you know, because you were asked, about
16 events between 1988 and 1991 which formed the subject of
17 a criminal prosecution?

18 A. Yep.

19 Q. And you've set out in your statement the fact that you
20 don't accept the claims that were made against you?

21 A. I do not accept them.

22 Q. But obviously, having heard evidence, the sheriff at
23 Elgin convicted you of four charges?

24 A. That is a fact.

25 Q. Sorry?

1 A. That is a fact.

2 Q. Yes. And jailed you for 12 months?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And that was in 2018?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. You were obviously there. Do you remember the sheriff
7 expressing frustration --

8 A. Oh yes.

9 Q. -- at the limited sentence she could impose upon you?

10 A. Oh yes.

11 Q. Do you remember why she said that?

12 A. I'm sorry, I really can't but estimate a reason why
13 somebody chose to do something. I'd better not start on
14 that or we'll all be here all night.

15 Q. Well, in a nutshell, was it not because she wasn't
16 satisfied that the things she had found you guilty of
17 were properly matters that should have been on summary
18 complaint; she felt it should have been prosecuted at
19 a higher level to reflect the gravity of what the
20 charges said?

21 A. I'll have to ask for your ... (Pause).

22 At the time of that comment by the sheriff, I'd just
23 been sent down for 12 months on accusations I still
24 believe were false. I'm afraid I wasn't at my best for
25 taking notes. I'm sorry, sir, but that is just -- I was

1 under water at that point.

2 Q. That was a matter, obviously, that you went to trial on
3 and you were found guilty?

4 A. Yes, that would be the trial when I was told there was
5 no sense bringing any evidence of my own because that
6 would just be the boys that I hadn't touched up.

7 Q. Did you give evidence yourself?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. So there was evidence led in counter to the evidence of
10 the prosecution?

11 A. It's difficult to prove you didn't do something and that
12 was made very clear to me that that was my job. One of
13 the questions that still rings in my mind was, "Why were
14 the boys accusing you then if you didn't do these
15 things?", which I felt was most -- sorry, we're going
16 back over it again. It's a fact that I was found
17 guilty, sir. It's also a fact I still believe I was not
18 guilty, but I can't help you further than that.

19 Q. I think the question that frustrated you was being
20 asked: why would they say these things if they weren't
21 true? Is that the essence of the question that you
22 found impossible to answer?

23 A. I felt that at that point I was being told it's my job
24 to disprove their allegations, it's not their job to
25 make them good, which seemed to me the exact reversal of

1 how I thought a trial was supposed to go. But also, it
2 doesn't help, sir, at the risk of crying all over the
3 carpet, it doesn't help if you happen to have
4 an autistic-style problem and you can't look people in
5 the face and you can't necessary behave the way people
6 are supposed to behave. That rings against you in
7 a court of law. Trust me on that.

8 Q. Can you think of any reason why these boys would say
9 that you did all the things in the summary complaint?

10 A. One of them I have strong opinions of, but I really
11 don't think it's correct for me to mention them in this
12 Inquiry.

13 Q. All right.

14 A. One I'm completely bemused about, you know, where did
15 this come from? He accused me of things that I never
16 did, and I don't know why. But ...

17 Q. One of the boys who spoke at your trial gave evidence to
18 us as well, and putting aside the matters of trial, did
19 suggest that he met you at your boat some years after he
20 left school. Do you remember that?

21 A. He met me at my what?

22 Q. You have a boat, do you not?

23 A. Oh, a boat? So sorry, my apologies, I totally misheard
24 you there.

25 One of the boys who accused me?

1 Q. Yes.

2 A. Absolutely not.

3 Q. And in particular, he said -- or he reports you saying,
4 "Let's keep this our little secret", referring back to
5 friendly overtures from you. Do you remember that?

6 A. Absolutely not.

7 Q. Are you saying he is wrong or that you don't remember
8 it?

9 A. I'm saying that he's wrong.

10 Q. I see.

11 A. If I can make it quite clear to the Inquiry, the
12 gentleman concerned was claiming that I had met him at
13 a house that I was not in possession of at the time he
14 claimed it. I owned the house and it was out on lease
15 to a fellow member of staff. He also had a jolly good
16 go at describing where the house was and needed to go
17 off and try again because in his first letter of
18 complaint he alleged it was in one village and then he
19 did his homework and found out, no, it was in another,
20 where upon he suddenly knew the postcode and the
21 telephone number as well. But I digress.

22 Q. Actually, Mr Keir, what he was telling us about was the
23 fact that whilst he was playing a computer game, having
24 been invited by you to play it, you sexually abused him.

25 A. At my house?

1 Q. Your computer.

2 A. So sorry, just no.

3 Q. And inviting you to the swimming pool to swim naked with

4 him?

5 A. No. This is just -- this did not happen. I'm sorry,

6 but I can't find a stronger way of putting it which is

7 polite to use in polite conversation.

8 Q. All right.

9 A. Just ...

10 Q. May I be blunt? Do you have an interest in boys?

11 A. There's a question with so many strings attached to it.

12 Q. Do you --

13 A. I don't want to sound rude. I'll go through the

14 position. I've always found it easy to teach

15 youngsters. I have, since I was retired, been convicted

16 of having indecent images of children. I suggest it

17 would be a category error to say that because I have

18 thoughts, I have therefore had actions. I suggest that

19 they may well have links, but there is not a necessary

20 causative either way.

21 Q. My question was: do you have an interest in boys? In

22 terms of you said you've been convicted. Just to be

23 clear, what were you convicted of?

24 A. Having indecent images of children.

25 Q. When you say "children", are they male children or

1 female children?

2 A. Male children.

3 Q. Is the answer to my original question: do you have

4 an interest in boys: yes?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Would you agree there is a connection between that

7 interest and the subject matters of the charges at Elgin

8 Sheriff Court?

9 A. I would say there is a strong linking on the two because

10 it was taken for granted that if I have an interest in

11 it, I must therefore be doing it, which would come as

12 a shock to the people who wrote Grand Theft Auto, but

13 anyway.

14 Q. These indecent images I think were found on your

15 computer?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. What else was found on your computer?

18 A. Well, there would have been --

19 Q. That was of interest to the police? (Pause).

20 A. I'm trying to think.

21 Q. Can I help you?

22 A. Please do, yes.

23 Q. Could we please look at document CFS-000000496, which

24 will appear on the screen in front of you. This is

25 a memo summarising material that was sent from the

1 police in England to the police in Scotland. Do you
2 understand?

3 A. Okay, yes.

4 Q. Sent in October 2017. This is in the year before you
5 appeared at Elgin Sheriff Court and were convicted of
6 events between 1988 and 1991.

7 A. Mm-hmm.

8 Q. And it lists documents, would you confirm, which were
9 found on your computer?

10 A. Right.

11 Q. Is that correct?

12 A. I'm now with you, my apologies. I wasn't --

13 Q. No, no.

14 A. -- quite sure where we were. Yes, there were stories
15 found on my computer.

16 Q. And as the document says, the police had read over and
17 the content is summarised as follows, and we have
18 a story of a naked summer, about a ten-year-old going on
19 holiday with his parents who were described as free
20 spirits, sunbathing, going to the bottom paragraph:

21 "Sunbathing naked, he heard a high voice belonging
22 to a boy a year or two younger than himself who was also
23 naked."

24 A. Go on.

25 Q. That's the sort of story that you chose to have on your

1 computer?

2 A. That's some of the stories I had on my computer. I also
3 had stuff by Kipling, ebooks from all sorts of places,
4 which the police did not find of interest. With the
5 greatest of respect, the police tend to be a little bit
6 confirmation bias, that they'll focus upon only the
7 stuff that they want to focus on.

8 Q. What this might confirm is that you have an interest in
9 boys.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Next story, "Speedos 2".

12 "This document [over the page] talks about an older
13 child running a badminton club and finding himself left
14 alone with the twins from the year below him. Following
15 badminton they all have a shower naked and the child
16 performs explicit sexual acts on both twins. One of the
17 twins thereafter performs a sexual act on the older
18 child."

19 Next one, friends:

20 " ... two 13-year-old children who were friends for
21 many years, starting to talk about sexual intercourse
22 and then carrying out various sexual acts on each
23 other."

24 And then perhaps most pertinent of all:

25 "School showers. This document relates to two males

1 teenagers carrying out sexual acts to each other within
2 the school showers. Initially both males were too shy
3 to go into the showers, however built up courage to do
4 this. On their first time in the showers with other
5 male pupils, all the male pupils become involved in
6 carrying out sexual acts together."

7 To be casual about it, is this the sort of material
8 that excites you?

9 A. That is of interest to me.

10 Q. How long has that been an interest of yours?

11 A. I wish I could answer that question fully and for sure.
12 I don't know. It's crept up on me over the years.

13 Q. Can you tell us when it began?

14 A. I'd struggle to be sure about that. I'm a little bit
15 shy about describing my own youth.

16 Q. What about the time at Barnard Castle? Was it present
17 then?

18 A. I don't think so. For one thing, I was at Barnard
19 Castle from 1973 to 1983 and the World Wide Web didn't
20 even exist then.

21 Q. I don't --

22 A. Or if it did, I definitely wasn't connected to it.

23 Q. No, I don't think we need the World Wide Web to let our
24 imagination run riot, do we?

25 A. Again, I go back to the concept of thoughts are one

1 thing, actions are another.

2 Q. It might be thought that going to a school environment,
3 being the assistant housemaster of a boys' house before
4 the advent of the World Wide Web would be exactly the
5 sort of material that would satisfy your interest. What
6 do you say to that?

7 A. I would say I hadn't got that material at that time and
8 so it wasn't of any interest to me because I was unaware
9 of it. I'm sorry to sound like I'm being picky
10 here.

11 Q. You started off by saying you didn't want to talk about
12 your childhood, which suggested that it may or may not
13 have been prevalent as you grew up. I ask you again,
14 when did your interest in boys begin?

15 A. I wish I could answer that, because you deserve
16 an answer, but sitting here in this chair right now
17 I would hesitate to put a decade on it. But I have
18 always -- I'm going to go beyond your question to what
19 I think is the question behind it. I have always done
20 my absolute best to treat human beings as human beings
21 and not as sexual playthings.

22 Q. Indeed. But has your interest -- let me put it very
23 simply -- has your interest in boys been something that
24 has been part of you lifelong?

25 A. I don't think so, no. I was very shy as a youngster

1 myself. I'll not go into details.

2 LADY SMITH: Well, can you at least help me with this,

3 Mr Keir?

4 A. It would be really helpful, my Lady.

5 LADY SMITH: Well, I don't know, you don't know what I'm

6 going to ask you. You've mentioned a few times your own

7 childhood, your young years. What is it about that time

8 of your life that is coming to mind when you're telling

9 me that?

10 A. It -- you'll understand this is difficult to answer in

11 an open court.

12 LADY SMITH: I appreciate that.

13 A. -- Inquiry, my Lady.

14 LADY SMITH: But just tell me because I really would find it

15 helpful.

16 A. I was brought up quite strictly with great reference to

17 the Bible, my grandfather having been a placed minister.

18 And I just remember thinking that I wasn't necessarily

19 that interested in girls and therefore dot dot dot. But

20 that was more a case of it wasn't every week that you

21 had this particular lecture but it was regularly made

22 very clear in church, which I would attend twice a week

23 because I was in the choir, that for a male to lie with

24 a male as with a female is an abomination before the

25 Lord. This was made very clear on a very regular basis

1 and was also the law of the land when I was growing up.
2 So I was -- I apologise to this gentleman for being so
3 shy about the whole thing, but I was brought up to be
4 shy about it, and it's been a lifetime's work to get to
5 be able to know who I am and what I am.

6 Sorry, I'm not going to -- I don't feel like going
7 into any more detail about that.

8 LADY SMITH: Mr Keir, there's absolutely no need to
9 apologise. Am I to take it from what you have described
10 that from long, long ago you have a memory of feeling
11 that boys looked more attractive to you than girls did?
12 Putting it at simply as that?

13 A. I think that would be the case, yes. Thank you,
14 my Lady, for saying "look more attractive" rather than
15 anything else. That's appreciated.

16 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

17 Mr Brown.

18 MR BROWN: I'm very much obliged, my Lady.

19 So we have clarified that. I hear what you say
20 about maintaining denial about the matters at Elgin
21 Sheriff Court, which you took to trial. Obviously in
22 relation to the indecent imagination, you pled guilty.

23 A. I was guilty, I pled guilty.

24 Q. Is there anything else that you wish to tell us about
25 that you're guilty of?

1 A. No. Just nothing. I had a long discussion with my wife
2 after Elgin, by which time the police had already
3 visited our house. It was made very clear to me that
4 any further activity of this sort would end our marriage
5 and I took the hint I should have spotted it much, much
6 earlier.

7 Q. I think that was in 2015 that the police became
8 involved?

9 A. I can't guarantee to match the numbers on that. I've
10 got a vague sequence of how things went, but no more
11 than that.

12 Q. All right. But from what you're saying, once the police
13 became involved, you and your wife had a conversation
14 and it was made abundantly plain to you?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. There could be nothing?

17 A. That is correct.

18 Q. What about before that? Were there other things?

19 A. Oh, sorry, now I'm with you.

20 Q. Mm.

21 A. No, there were not. I -- I do believe I can look you in
22 the eye and say I never touched a boy in a sexual
23 manner. Or for the maintenance of -- or a girl either,
24 just to make that generally round.

25 Q. But after you had the conversation with your wife in

1 2015 or whenever the police first became involved, it
2 was quite clear: no more?

3 A. The discussion we had was about the images.

4 Q. And yet I think it was 2017 that the police found the
5 images, in England.

6 A. I'm confused, sir, because at one stage you were saying
7 2015 and one time you were saying 2017. I stick with my
8 comment about I can't remember the exact dates, but we
9 had a long, long discussion when the images were found
10 and it was made clear to me that I was now on my last
11 chance.

12 Q. I see, thank you. It may have been confusion on my part
13 about which police --

14 A. I'm sorry, I didn't want to be rude.

15 MR BROWN: But it was the Scottish or the English police.

16 Mr Keir, thank you very much.

17 LADY SMITH: Are there any outstanding applications for
18 questions?

19 Mr Keir, that completes the questions we have for
20 you today. I'm very grateful to you for having assisted
21 us with the work we're doing here, both in terms of your
22 written statement and coming here today to answer what
23 I fully appreciate haven't been the most comfortable
24 questions at times although I hope the questions about
25 life in general at Gordonstoun were not so uncomfortable

1 because you have helped me build the picture of
2 Gordonstoun itself separately from the difficult
3 questions we had to ask you. So thank you for that.

4 A. May I make one very brief statement, my Lady?

5 LADY SMITH: Please do. Feel free.

6 A. Which isn't on here, although it is, in a way.

7 Please do look at the bullying child on child.

8 LADY SMITH: We are.

9 A. That was the one thing that worried me when I was at
10 Gordonstoun. I thought there was bullying child on
11 child, but in the absence of any report from a child,
12 I couldn't action anything. I did have that feeling
13 that in one or two cases -- and I mean one or two, not
14 one or two hundred, but in one or two cases, youngsters
15 were getting away with being quite bad to each other.

16 I'll stop now, my Lady. You're not here to hear me
17 rabble on, but I can understand that the main tenet of
18 the Inquiry is to look at the staff, but please do look
19 at the children on children as well.

20 LADY SMITH: Oh, the main tenet of this Inquiry is the
21 interests of children and I'm looking at all forms of
22 abuse of children in care, whether it be boarding
23 schools or other institutions, so please be assured that
24 that is very important to us as well and we are looking
25 at it very carefully.

1 A. Thank you, my Lady.

2 LADY SMITH: Please feel free to go, and thank you again for
3 coming today.

4 A. Do I take this out?

5 LADY SMITH: If you just leave it there, we'll look after
6 it. Thank you.

7 (The witness withdrew)

8 MR BROWN: My Lady, I don't know whether you'd like to take
9 the short break and then we can have a few read-ins?

10 LADY SMITH: Yes, thank you very much.

11 MR BROWN: Thank you.

12 (3.21 pm)

13 (A short break)

14 (3.40 pm)

15 LADY SMITH: Ms Bennie, when you're ready.

16 MS BENNIE: My Lady, the first read-in bears the reference
17 WIT-3-000000091. My Lady, this witness wishes to remain
18 anonymous and has adopted the pseudonym of 'Chris'.

19 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

20 'Chris' (read)

21 MS BENNIE: This statement is submitted to the Inquiry by
22 'Chris', a former pupil at Gordonstoun School from 1997
23 to 2002.

24 "Prior to Gordonstoun I attended school in Edinburgh
25 from 1992. School routine was by its very nature

1 routine. In Cumming House, my boarding house for the
2 duration of my time at Gordonstoun, morning wake up was
3 at 7 o'clock, followed by an opportunity to shower and
4 wash (and latterly shave) in the ablutions, comprising
5 three co-joined areas of showers, sinks and loos.
6 Breakfast in the refectory followed, then chapel
7 (principally Christian in outlook, though recognising
8 and catering for the breadth of faiths within the
9 student population) and then onto lessons, interspersed
10 by break time and lunch.

11 Afternoons were given over to games (and services),
12 then supper and prep.

13 There was ordinarily time for socialising with
14 friends from other boarding houses - noting the vast
15 majority of pupils during my time were boarders - prior
16 to and after supper in the environs of the refectory.

17 Evenings followed prep allowed for free time,
18 typically outside in the summer months, indeed during
19 the winter - often watching TV or films, reading or
20 games in the boarding house. Evening routine was
21 staggered by year group, all lights out by 10.30.

22 As a non-academically selective school, teaching
23 catered for a broad spectrum of abilities. From my
24 perspective there was no issue with the quality or
25 quantity of teaching. Whilst my examination results

1 were not glittering, this stemmed from a lack of
2 personal endeavour and no reflection on the teaching
3 staff.

4 Pastorally, staff in the boarding house and across
5 the school strove to provide an environment that allowed
6 personal development for all within an eclectic and
7 multinational student population. Further, pupils were
8 allocated a tutor providing an additional point of
9 contact throughout one's time at the school to support
10 holistic development.

11 Organised social events took place a couple of times
12 a term in younger years and most Saturdays in the sixth
13 form. These ordinarily took the form of a dance in one
14 of the boarding houses, and invariably were well
15 attended. In the sixth form socials were held in the
16 basement of Gordonstoun House most Saturdays. Students
17 were permitted two cans of beer or cider at a social,
18 managed by a ticketed system overseen by staff. Again,
19 these were popular events.

20 A particular highlight, and a hallmark of
21 Gordonstoun education, was the opportunity to take part
22 in expeditions throughout Scotland, together with sail
23 training voyages, the latter preceded by seamanship
24 lessons sailing from Hopeman Harbour on cutters whilst
25 at the school. All activities were overseen by suitably

1 qualified and experienced specialist staff.

2 I do not recall any concerns relating to the
3 standard of instruction or oversight.

4 During five years at the school I took part in
5 several expeds, perhaps seven, and three cruises on the
6 west coast. These were formative experiences, facing
7 the elements, working as a team, in hitherto unknown
8 parts of Scotland, that were hugely enjoyable.

9 There were infrequent and supervised trips to Elgin,
10 the closest major town, affording pupils an opportunity
11 to shop or to visit the cinema. During exeat weekends,
12 any pupils not returning home were ordinarily taken out
13 on a day out to Inverness, a trip that would invariably
14 include a visit to the cinema.

15 In the sixth form pupils were allowed to visit
16 designated restaurants in Elgin and Lossiemouth for
17 meals with schoolfriends on a Saturday evening.

18 My sister and brother both attended Gordonstoun.
19 Contact with parents was maintained by payphones in each
20 of the boarding houses, and latterly by mobile phone,
21 whilst parents could make contact with their offspring
22 by making a phone call to the housemaster where
23 necessary. I would speak to my parents at least weekly,
24 if not more frequently. Christmas was always spent at
25 home. Birthdays at school were marked informally. I do

1 not recall any specific details of my five birthdays at
2 Gordonstoun.

3 From what I can recall, ill-discipline was neither
4 particularly prevalent nor egregious. Detention on
5 a Saturday evening was a staple for those who had erred,
6 persistent offenders subject to a blue card that
7 required signing by class teachers at regular intervals
8 throughout the day in an effort to keep wayward
9 youngsters on track. More significant misdemeanours
10 were subject to a period of rustication. During my
11 time, a very few serious disciplinary matters resulted
12 in expulsion.

13 In sum, my school years are fondly remembered. Many
14 of the experiences and extracurricular activities, in
15 conjunction with the examination results demanded by
16 universities and most employers, have contributed and
17 continue to do so to my personal and professional
18 advancement.

19 With regards to the terms of reference of the
20 Inquiry, I was not privy to any inappropriate,
21 unprofessional or abusive behaviour from any members of
22 the school's academic or support staff during my five
23 years at Gordonstoun. I remain in regular contact with
24 several of my schoolfriends and more significantly
25 married a fellow Old Gordonstounian. My time at

1 Gordonstoun was memorable for the friendships formed,
2 the opportunities for pushing boundaries on the water
3 and in the hills, and the genuine interest of staff in
4 preparing pupils for life beyond school at the dawn of
5 the 21st Century.

6 Following school, I took a gap year alongside two
7 friends in Southeast Asia prior to reading civil
8 engineering at University College London.

9 I commissioned from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst
10 in 2008 and continue to serve in the army.

11 I have no objection to my witness statement being
12 published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry.

13 I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are
14 true."

15 My Lady, this statement is dated 1 October 2020.

16 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

17 MS BENNIE: The next statement bears the reference

18 WIT-3-00000081.

19 My Lady, this witness wishes to remain anonymous and
20 has adopted the pseudonym of 'Alison'.

21 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

22 'Alison' (read)

23 MS BENNIE: "My name is 'Alison'. My year of birth is 1984.

24 I was born and grew up in Norfolk, where my parents own
25 a farm. I have a fairly straightforward family

1 background: one elder brother, parents still married.

2 Prior to Gordonstoun I attended a prep school in
3 Norfolk from the age of eight to 13. I was a day pupil
4 there for the first four years and a boarder for the
5 final two.

6 My childhood both at home and at prep school was
7 essentially a rural, windswept one. I spent a lot of
8 time climbing trees and walking dogs.

9 My parents are fairly open-minded people for their
10 generation. They did their best to find schools which
11 would allow us the same wholesome outdoors environment
12 as home provided. Paying for private education was not
13 an easy task but one which they prioritised above all
14 else.

15 It is probably worth mentioning that my father also
16 went to Gordonstoun from 1963 to 1968 though this is in
17 no way the reason why my brother and I went. My father
18 disagrees with tradition for the sake of tradition, and
19 whilst he had a wonderful time at the school (and in no
20 way shares the Colditz in kilts opinion, despite being
21 there at the same time at Prince Charles) it was in fact
22 my prep school which insisted my parents consider
23 Gordonstoun for our senior school education.

24 I arrived at Gordonstoun at the end of August 1997.
25 I stayed for the full five years and left in the summer

1 of 2002. I achieved nine GCSEs and three A-levels.

2 I was in Flewlands House and had two housemistresses
3 during my time. The first did an excellent job of
4 pretending she didn't have her finger on the pulse when
5 in fact she was absolutely on the ball and seemed to
6 know what we had got up to before we had even done it.
7 A unique skill. When she retired, Mrs Parker took over,
8 a much younger but no less observant housemistress. She
9 was possibly stricter than the first housemistress, but
10 also more relatable. I am still in touch with her
11 today.

12 Mark Pyper was the headmaster throughout my time at
13 Gordonstoun. He was a very visible and involved head.
14 No ivory towers. He made a point of knowing every new
15 pupil by name and face on their day of arrival, which
16 from my experience set the tone for the welcoming
17 environment found throughout the school.

18 Each morning started with a bell to wake us.
19 A lower sixth pupil was then in charge of making sure we
20 were all up and out of the house on time. Breakfast was
21 compulsory and all houses ate in the refectory together.
22 We usually sat in year groups though this wasn't
23 prescribed, before walking to the chapel. The walk to
24 chapel each morning, for a reason I don't think I can
25 put my finger on, is one of my favourite memories of

1 school. If I had to guess, it was perhaps because I was
2 excited about the day ahead but either way, I view it as
3 a positive sign.

4 Chapel took place every morning and was usually
5 upbeat and not a chore. The religious element wasn't
6 really a significant factor. The main point of chapel
7 seemed to be the bringing of the school together at the
8 start of each day and there was always a buzz, even
9 though it was early and, in the winter, often still
10 dark. We sat grouped together by houses. Different
11 things happened on different days. Fridays I remember
12 were for hymn practice. The headmaster's talk every
13 Thursday was always interesting as he was an excellent
14 orator. He asked the occasional tricky general
15 knowledge question, correct answers were rewarded with
16 a chocolate bar and a small moment of public
17 recognition. I once answered one of the questions
18 correctly and have never forgotten the thrill.

19 Lessons took place until around 2.30 each day,
20 having had break and lunch in the middle. We had
21 a small amount of downtime after lessons ended. Every
22 afternoon there was an activity of some description.
23 I think sport was twice a week, services were on
24 a Wednesday. I was a member of the fire brigade which
25 was enormous fun.

1 After activities we had a larger break before
2 supper. During this time we would go back to our houses
3 to shower and have some tea and toast. In Plewlands we
4 had two large communal areas and most of the house would
5 traipse through at this time to chat. There was lots of
6 mixing of age groups and no aggressive hierarchy which
7 saw the younger pupils terrified of the older ones.
8 I remember being a little intimidated in the earlier
9 years but never bullied. Now that I think about it, we
10 actually integrated pretty seamlessly across year
11 groups. I had friends two years above and below me.

12 After supper we had a bit more time before back to
13 the house for prep. After prep, for the older students,
14 there was the opportunity to go out and visit friends in
15 other houses or take part in more activities or sports.
16 I can't remember what time we had to be back by but it
17 wasn't late. The same lower sixth pupil on rounds would
18 then check us back in and shepherd us towards being in
19 bed by a certain hour, at different times depending on
20 our year group. That person then checked in with the
21 housemistress once everyone was back in their rooms.

22 The most radical, rebellious thing I can say about
23 life in Plewlands was that in my early years some of the
24 older girls used to smoke in the shower room as the fans
25 swept the smoke away. It never bothered us much but it

1 used to drive the housemistress bananas.

2 The girls' houses would do their own washing (the
3 boys didn't - make of that what you will for gender
4 equality. Though the girls definitely preferred to do
5 their own). We changed our own beds every two weeks.
6 There was a house matron and two incredibly lovely
7 cleaners who we all adored. They kept an eye on us in
8 addition to the housemistress, assistant headmistress
9 and a handful of house tutors.

10 I remember Plewlands very fondly as a place where we
11 all sat around in the evenings -
12 housemistress/assistant, tutors on duty and pupils of
13 all year groups - chatting happily.

14 We were weighed about once a term. Maybe less. I'm
15 not sure if there was any specific regularity to it.
16 This was done at the San. I suspect this was to keep
17 an eye on any eating disorders, though in my time there
18 was never a notable eating disorder problem amongst the
19 girls. Certainly not one which swept up entire groups
20 in mass copycat hysteria. I can only remember two girls
21 with this issue, both of them were friends of mine.
22 Both had their own mental health issues which preceded
23 their time at Gordonstoun. The most severe of the two
24 (whose anorexia was very noticeable) gradually allowed
25 people to help and changes were made to allow her to be

1 a day pupil, which was what she needed. For the final
2 two years at school she was happy and healthy and still
3 is today.

4 The San was actually quite a jolly place run by two
5 very friendly nurses, one of whom became great friends
6 with my parents and came to my wedding a few years ago.

7 Routine was obviously a little different at the
8 weekends. I spent many Saturdays travelling on buses to
9 hockey matches in far off places. You have to really
10 hunt down your competitors when you're based in the
11 remote northeast Scotland.

12 Access to Elgin increased with age and by the final
13 year we could go out for an evening meal on a Saturday
14 night. In the younger years we were bussed into Elgin
15 periodically for an afternoon to wander the aisles of
16 Woolworths and no doubt buy cigarettes.

17 There was always something organised for Saturday
18 evening in the younger years. Either a reeling night,
19 a movie or a BBQ. In sixth form we had a social which
20 amounted to two beers and music no one could talk over.
21 It felt grown up.

22 We must have had a lie in on a Sunday morning though
23 I can't remember. But the pace of things was definitely
24 slower at the weekends, which we needed. The
25 Gordonstoun campus is enormous which meant we spent

1 a lot of time walking from one end to the other.
2 I always remember my mother insisting we sleep whenever
3 we got home at the beginning of the holidays.

4 At the end of the autumn term was the house
5 Christmas supper, a black tie event which was wildly
6 anticipated out of all proportion.

7 There were two birthday traditions when I arrived at
8 Gordonstoun, neither of which would delight Ofsted but
9 both felt harmless to the pupil body. Or at least the
10 majority of it. I obviously can't speak for everyone.
11 These were both pupil-led and not sanctioned by staff.

12 The first was to throw the birthday boy (rarely
13 a girl) into the lake. My memory is that this was done
14 in good humour (as it was usually the more popular ones
15 who went in) though I'm sure there were some who went in
16 against their will. In the main though, it was what we
17 viewed as pretty innocent and good-natured. And part of
18 the sport was trying to outfox the staff who were
19 charged with trying to stop it.

20 The second was called a sproggy line up. The
21 youngest two year groups were known by the older ones as
22 sprogs, the history of which pre-dates me but was in my
23 day more a term of joking endearment rather than
24 anything else. A sproggy line up involved the younger
25 pupils of the opposite sex filing by and kissing the

1 cheek of the birthday person, usually during breakfast.
2 It was again pretty innocent in our eyes and for the
3 majority of us pretty good fun, though again I'm sure
4 there were some shyers pupils who would rather not have
5 taken part. I don't remember anyone being forced to
6 take part but I think it probably would have been looked
7 at as odd for those who chose not to.

8 We always knew that both traditions were banned and
9 staff intervened whenever they saw them taking place.
10 I think I'm right in saying that the lake throwing
11 tradition was stopped completely by the time I was in my
12 second year. And the sproggy line ups were stamped out
13 around a similar time. I think we would periodically
14 try to reignite the tradition but the revolution
15 wouldn't last long before the powers on high reminded us
16 that that wasn't going to wash.

17 My parents visited on most leaveouts and for those
18 when they didn't, I went to stay at a friend's house who
19 lived somewhere closer than Norfolk.

20 We had three landlines in our boarding house. I had
21 an account which allowed me to call home whenever
22 I wanted. The fee for the calls was charged back to my
23 parents at the end of term. We could also receive calls
24 on those phones.

25 In my final year, I remember one or two pupils had

1 mobile phones but no more than that and there was no
2 phone reception in the deepest depths of Morayshire
3 anyway so they were pretty useless.

4 My older brother started at Gordonstoun two years
5 before me. I would catch up with him on most days and
6 he would come and visit me in my house when he was
7 hungry and wanted somebody to make him pesto pasta.

8 It's perhaps worth noting that my brother had
9 a tricky start to his time at Gordonstoun. In the early
10 days he was bullied by a more confident, very bullish
11 boy in a different house. My brother's housemaster was
12 swift to find out and it was resolved without much
13 drama. There was no attempt to sweep it under the
14 carpet or deny it was happening. My brother went on to
15 enjoy school, was the captain in [REDACTED], took part in
16 an exchange to Australia and sailed across the Atlantic,
17 so the early hiccup certainly didn't taint his time.

18 Discipline and punishment.

19 As far as I can remember, the housemasters and
20 housemistresses dealt with the day-to-day discipline -
21 any reports of mucking around in class or not turning up
22 for things was within their territory. I remember the
23 majority of the housemasters approaching their role in
24 a very parental manner. Mrs Parker certainly was very
25 protective of us and equally very disappointed when we

1 stuffed up. She took it enormously personally when
2 I was once caught holding an unlit cigarette and the
3 shame of disappointing her had the intended affect.
4 Thankfully she forgave me. When one of my friends was
5 turning 18 I asked Mrs Parker if I could use her kitchen
6 to bake a birthday cake. I spent two hours making it
7 and when her dog promptly ate it whilst it was cooling
8 on the rack her husband drove me Asda to buy
9 a replacement. There was a family atmosphere in
10 Plewlands and I don't know many who weren't happy.

11 Similarly, my brother had an rugby shirt which he
12 wore during every waking moment in which school uniform
13 was not required. He barely ever sent it to the laundry
14 to be washed. His housemaster's wife noticed this and
15 would periodically insist he gave it to her so that she
16 could wash it herself in her own machine and return it
17 to him by the time he woke up the next day, just to make
18 sure that he maintained some level of socially
19 acceptable hygiene. This type of behaviour is, I think,
20 a good example of the type of care that we were given.
21 Maybe every housemaster wasn't quite as attentive, but
22 we were certainly treated as individuals needing
23 individual care and attention and I believe the
24 housemasters did an excellent job as substitute parents.

25 The most severe crimes or the repeat offenders were

1 dealt with by the headmaster. Drugs meant immediate
2 expulsion which we were all well aware of. I can think
3 of one case of that in my time, but there must have been
4 one or two more, however there certainly wasn't a drugs
5 culture.

6 There was always a sombre air about the school in
7 the days after someone was expelled. Despite its
8 well-known name, Gordonstoun is a relatively small
9 school with only around 450 pupils and the vast majority
10 knew each other by name. No one was anonymous. Some
11 were quieter obviously, some kept more to themselves,
12 but everyone had a face with a name. Therefore
13 an expulsion always felt like something had been
14 amputated.

15 Of discipline in general I would say that we were
16 given a certain amount of freedom and independence, but
17 we knew where the lines were drawn. Some tested the
18 elastic limits of this more than others but the majority
19 of us were law-abiding teenagers most of the time.

20 The standard of education provided.

21 If I can level one criticism of any significance at
22 the school - and I think there would only be one - it
23 was that we were not pushed enough academically to
24 achieve our potential. The teachers were engaged and
25 knowledgeable but in my opinion there was not enough

1 drive to ensure we saw our academic capabilities to
2 their fullest. Teenagers frequently try to take the
3 easiest path and I certainly was one who was guilty of
4 doing enough to get by and not be on the concern list.
5 But my grades definitely fell short of what they could
6 have been had I been encouraged to appreciate the
7 long-term benefits of applying oneself versus the
8 short-term temptation to say what I had done was good
9 enough to allow myself to close the textbook and go and
10 do something more fun. For the extremely intelligent
11 pupils who were always destined for top grades, there
12 was no problem. But for the middle band of us who were
13 bright but needed pushing, I think more could have been
14 done.

15 I wouldn't have wanted to be in an academic
16 hothouse, but it seemed to me that as long as you
17 weren't failing or drastically behind others, then you
18 were allowed, to a certain degree, to cruise on
19 autopilot.

20 The outdoor education on the other hand was second
21 to none. I cannot count the number of people who are
22 baffled when they discover that at school I sailed
23 around the Outer Hebrides, was an active participant in
24 local emergency services, and spent a term at school in
25 Melbourne. It ceremony helped many of us become

1 confident and unflappable characters. I would also say
2 that it is a significant reason why Gordonstoun is not
3 an elitist school. The experiences available to us were
4 extraordinary and we were very lucky, but it is not
5 a pretentious school and the pupils are not precious.
6 I believe that in a large part this is because we were
7 not mollycoddled by privilege and we were always
8 expected to do what we could to serve and to help
9 others. The pupil demographic was also very diverse and
10 as such it was normal to find yourself halfway up
11 a Scottish mountain in a motley group that included
12 a Thai boy who had previously trained as a monk and the
13 school postman's daughter. It never really mattered
14 where you came from as long as you took part.

15 Expeditions were fairly regular events and we were
16 given more responsibility the older we got. By that
17 I mean the older we got, the less we were accompanied by
18 teachers for every step and the more we were expected to
19 navigate ourselves and correct our own mistakes. On the
20 expeds of my later years, the teachers somehow managed
21 to always know where we were at all times despite having
22 to oversee maybe three separate groups, all taking
23 different routes.

24 Cruise, officially called sail training, was
25 compulsory twice during the five years. However, more

1 opportunities were available for those who wanted to
2 make the most of it, which most of us did.

3 A large part of the school's ethos is on service so
4 there was always a lot of emphasis on others, both close
5 to home and internationally. I took part in a water
6 sanitation project in Thailand but also spent December
7 evenings packing shopping for the elderly in Asda.

8 As far as our health and welfare was concerned,
9 I could not and cannot find fault.

10 There is I think a delicate balance for boarding
11 schools to achieve in fulfilling their responsibilities
12 of pastoral care whilst also allowing teenagers to
13 mature and gain independence as they head towards
14 adulthood and I believe the school got that just right.

15 Leaving school.

16 I went to Leeds University. I skipped around
17 between industries in the early years after graduating
18 before eventually settling on a career that straddles
19 education and writing. I worked for a number of years
20 as a school consultant before taking roles as the
21 education editor for a magazine, reviewing schools and
22 prattling on about the need to ignore league tables. In
23 the last year I now write principally freelance on
24 education and family when motherhood allows. I am
25 married with two boys.

1 In my role as a schools consultant and as
2 an education editor I have visited a fair number of
3 private schools, both in the UK and across Asia, and
4 I am fairly familiar with the general challenges that
5 they face in the current day. Not just the accusations
6 of historic abuse but also the need to adequately tackle
7 things such as mental health, exam pressure, social
8 media and now global pandemics, all whilst trying to
9 make sure that the pupils get decent grades and their
10 books still balance. I have therefore had the chance to
11 put a magnifying glass to my own education. My
12 conclusion is always the same, I wouldn't be a teenager
13 again for all the tea in China, but I consider myself
14 extremely fortunate to have seen through my teenage
15 years at Gordonstoun.

16 Gordonstoun is not a school for everyone. There
17 haven't been cold showers since my father's day but it's
18 still a place which requires a fair dose of mucking in
19 and taking part. Where some public schools major in
20 pomp, ceremony and privilege, Gordonstoun majors in
21 rolling up sleeves.

22 I would describe myself as a pretty typical
23 Gordonstoun girl who had a pretty typical Gordonstoun
24 experience. I had great friends, I took part, I had
25 fun, I felt valued. I pushed some boundaries but

1 usually stayed within reaching distance of the 11th
2 commandment. I was perhaps sportier than most which
3 maybe helped in a school which puts emphasis on the
4 outdoors but even those who weren't sporty were just as
5 settled as me.

6 I have absolutely no knowledge of the historic
7 accusations which have been made about the school in
8 recent years, either by me directly, by friends or
9 through rumour. I do not have Gordonstoun on
10 a nostalgic pedestal; no school is perfect, no teaching
11 body is without its weak links. But the environment
12 which Gordonstoun offered in my time was safe and caring
13 while allowing us space to figure out for ourselves.
14 I know how tremendously fortunate I am to have been
15 a pupil there.

16 I hope my account as helped to add some colour and
17 understanding to life at the school.

18 I have no objection to my witness statement being
19 published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry.

20 I believe the facts stated in this statement are true."

21 My Lady, this statement is signed 12 October 2020.

22 LADY SMITH: Thank you very much, Ms Bennie.

23 We'll finish there for today and then we'll have
24 a witness in person first thing tomorrow; is that right,
25 Mr Brown?

1 MR BROWN: My Lady, yes. Tomorrow we're going to have some
2 more read-ins but we'll have two live witnesses. Just
3 to say that we are now moving on from applicant evidence
4 to the school side with former headmasters and
5 administrators.

6 LADY SMITH: Those are the witnesses who will provide
7 evidence both tomorrow and Friday?

8 MR BROWN: That's correct, yes.

9 LADY SMITH: Thank you very much and thank you to everybody
10 for being here today. I'll rise now and look forward to
11 seeing you at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

12 (4.11 pm)

13 (The Inquiry adjourned until 10.00 am on Thursday,
14 14 October 2021)

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