

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

KSN

Support person present: No

1. My full name is KSN. My date of birth is 1960.
My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before boarding school

2. I lived at home with my father, who was an artist and taught drawing and painting at, and my mother, . I had three older brothers, and there was approximately five years between each of us. We lived in the south side of Edinburgh.
3. Prior to going to Edinburgh Academy, I attended Grange Home School in Edinburgh. That was a really nice school, which was run by an older woman. I can remember walking to and from my house to the school. I think I went there from the age of five until I was about six years old.
4. My eldest brother had been sent to a different private school in Edinburgh, which was run by the Christian Brothers. He had a miserable time there as there was a lot of brutality. There were many incidents of physical and corporal punishment by the staff. He only lasted about two years there before my parents moved him to Ampleforth College, the same boarding school in England that my father and his brother had been to.
5. My parents decided that my other brothers would be sent to Edinburgh Academy. They both spent time at Edinburgh Academy before they also moved to the school in

England, the next oldest to me just for a year, but the second oldest attended until he was 13 – just like me, as it turned out. When it came to me it was already an established route, that I would be going to the Academy, then later moved to Ampleforth. I was six years old when I was sent to Edinburgh Academy as a day boy.

6. I think because my siblings had been at the school it negated any need for any entrance exam to be completed. I don't recall any visit to the school before I started there.

Edinburgh Academy

7. When I started at Edinburgh Academy it was at Denham Green and would have been September 196█. I was just about to turn seven. This part of the school was much the same as my previous school, just bigger and all made up of five- and six-year-olds. I was then in the prep school from 196█ until 197█. After being in P6 I moved into the upper school, which I attended for the whole of the first year and the first two terms of my second, leaving in April 197█.
8. Denham Green was in a big Victorian house and there were some other prefab buildings for some of the classes. I can remember there was a huge sloping grass lawn leading down from the main building, and I have memories of a games day and rolling eggs down that slope.

Routine at Edinburgh Academy

9. When I went to Denham Green I would take the bus to and from Holy Corner to Inverleith and walk from the bus stop to the school. Initially I may have been accompanied by my mother or our help, but after a short time I would travel on my own. I would not countenance that now; for a six-year-old to travel several miles through the city to go to school.

10. When I arrived at Denham Green it was the last year before I was old enough to go to the prep school. Most of the other pupils had been at Denham Green longer than me. They were all much more established with the school routine and they were all in their own groups of friends. I was at that part of the school until I was nearly eight then I moved into the prep school.
11. I seem to remember the time I spent at Denham Green was really good and friendly and there were no issues while I was there.
12. At Denham Green, and then at the prep school, we started about 8.45 a.m. I don't remember if this was in a form class at Denham Green, but it was at the prep school. When we started the day at prep school, and in the more senior years, we had assembly first.
13. The prep school was a modern, purpose-built building on two storeys. When I started there I can remember I was really excited about the change of environment. The school had a long frontage and to the left was a set of wide stairs to the entrance. As you went into the building, to the left was mainly administrative rooms and to the right was a range of three or four classrooms on each of the two storeys. From the entrance area there was another corridor that led out to the prefab buildings at the back.
14. There was a set of stairs, initially to a mezzanine level, where the school hall was situated. It was also where we would have assembly and where some of the school shows were put on. It also converted into the school gym.
15. There was another set of stairs leading to the upper floor. Mr Britton, the prep school headteacher, and his secretary had their offices up there. I think there might have been other classrooms up there as well.

Mealtimes/Food

16. We would have lunch in the main hall, and I don't recall much about it, except that it was not very good. Things that stick in my mind are the spam fritters, haggis and some disgusting pink sludge that would be served with strawberry sauce. At least once a week we would have mince and tatties.

Washing/bathing

17. When I was in the prep school we would have games in the afternoon. On those days we would have a shower after games finished. I can remember, on one of those times, Iain Wares was hanging around outside, but he did not come into the showers.
18. On some occasions another rugby fifteen would be coming in for a shower and their teacher, I can't recall his name, would be hanging around waiting on the boys coming out. As boys passed him, he would flick his towel at the boys striking them on their bare backsides. If we were there he would do that to us as well. Being in the changing rooms always made you feel very uncomfortable because you felt very vulnerable and never knew what the teachers might do; you were certainly aware of their attention being on you to what felt an uncomfortable degree.

Clothing/uniform

19. I don't remember the uniform at Denham Green but seem to recall it was more relaxed than when I moved up to prep school. Other than wearing shorts at Denham Green, I don't recall what other school clothes I had. When we got into the prep school at Arboretum, things definitely changed, and there were very strict rules about uniform – the school rule book had reams and reams on what you had to wear and any variations.
20. We wore thick woollen blue shorts, a shirt and tie, a blue blazer, a cap and a regulation raincoat. You had to wear black shoes and knee-length socks. You had a satchel and a games bag in which to bring in your kit on games days – which I think

was twice a week in the prep school. Kit was a pair of lightweight blue shorts, a white vest and black plimsolls.

21. We would regularly get pulled up for any infraction of the uniform rules, such as ties not done up properly or socks around your ankles. You were supposed to wear elastic garters; those who didn't were immediately marked out for special attention from the teachers. Sometimes boys would be punished for not being smart enough on their way home from school. It happened so frequently that it seemed every bus must have contained at least one member of the public whose sole function in life was to immediately report any unkempt dress or rowdy behaviour from eight-year-old schoolboys.
22. When I went into S1, the first year in the senior school, also known as '*geits*', we were allowed to wear long trousers. In the winter of that year, we were also allowed to wear our tweed jacket. In the summer the tweed jacket changed to a blue blazer.
23. All the school uniform I needed for my time in the school we had to get from Aitken and Niven. I think they were the sole suppliers for many of the public schools and obviously made a lot of money out of it.

Leisure time

24. I can recall there was a time when Mr Britton visited our house with his wife and son for drinks. Mr Britton was aware that my father was an artist and he considered himself something of a playwright, so he shared our family's interest in culture. Each year he wrote a play to be produced and performed by all the boys in P6 at the end of school year. In my final term I found out that I had been offered [REDACTED] role in the play. I will never know if that was on my own merit or whether it was a result of that visit to my house. I can only remember that it was an embarrassingly awful play, but at least [REDACTED].
25. Because my brothers were either away at boarding school or at university, I spent two-thirds of the year as the only child in the house from the age of six onwards and

that forced me to find my own interior life. It also made communicating anything that was happening at school that much more difficult.

26. As I got older a very definite division between school and home life cemented itself and I learned to compartmentalise things. I had a couple of friends who lived locally who went to other schools, but I would never dream of them mixing with friends from school, and vice versa.
27. Most of my time at school was spent thinking about what I could do at home or at the weekends, and school wasn't allowed to interfere with my home life: I would avoid and put off homework until the very last moment. I learned only to be interested in the things I was interested in: everything else was irrelevant to me.
28. I can remember the senior school had a tuck shop and if you had any spare pocket money (I very rarely ever did as I spent it all on Airfix kits) you could get a bridie, a form of pasty, from there during the morning break. This was an area where the ephors, the school equivalent of prefects, might try to bully some of the younger boys. It got to a stage where my friends and I would try to hide away from them and found a safe haven in the library. Going in there was the start of my lifelong appreciation of books.

Trips and holidays

29. I don't remember any trips for day pupils in years three or four at Arboretum. There were days out later in the school. I understand the boarders may have had more but that might have been to keep them amused at the weekends.
30. I did get taken on a day trip by Mr Brownlee to the home of the explorer David Livingston, in Lanarkshire. We also went to the site of the Battle of Bannockburn and the Wallace Monument. I can clearly remember he also took us to the docks, either at Grangemouth or at Leith, and we were allowed to go aboard a Russian ship, including up to the bridge. The crew gave us all small metal lapel badges with Soviet symbols on them – the Soviet star, hammer and sickles, that sort of thing, which had

a lot of kudos for 10- or 11-year-old boys. These are examples of some of the good things that Brownlee could do as a teacher – which of course were allied to all the bad, psychotic things that he did.

Schooling

31. We would have classes in the morning until lunch and again in the afternoon. There was also a mid-morning break. At Denham Green we might have finished a little earlier than the rest of the school.
32. When I went into the prep school I was allocated to class ■■■ and the form teacher was Mrs Atkinson, who I remember as a warm person. This was a transition year from the relaxed atmosphere of Denham Green and graduating into a more formal side in the prep school. As my form mistress she would have taken most of the classes. I think we may have gone out of the room for art, gym, and music. I managed to finish 2nd in my class that year and I also won a book prize for excellence and both those achievements meant I was able to move up a level the following year. I still have both the books I received as prizes. I never got any other prizes in all my time at the Academy.
33. The next year I was moved into class ■■■, and I had Mrs Baxter as my form teacher. She was another nice teacher. More was expected of you and life in the school was becoming stricter and I can recall being hit over the knuckles with a ruler by her for misbehaving in the class.
34. In P5 I had Miss Reid as my first teacher there, but she left after the first term. She would have been the first teacher where I noticed a sea change in the school. She was very strict, and I can recall also being hit with a ruler by her several times. She sent me out of the class to stand in the corridor at least once.
35. I think there were between twenty and twenty-five boys in a class. During the time I was at the school it was all boys. I don't recall there being any difference in how the day pupils were treated in the classes in comparison with boarders, and I think the

fact that there were boarders was largely irrelevant to us day boys; I don't remember feeling that their experience of school might be any different to ours.

36. It was in P6 that Mr Brownlee became my form teacher. I cannot remember if he taught me geography or other subjects in P5, but he definitely did in P6. There was always trepidation when we were in his class. Sometimes if someone was not coming up to his standard he would encourage others in the class to ridicule them for their poor performance.
37. Despite his bad reputation Mr Brownlee was also well known as being a respected teacher. He was one of the leading members of staff and in some ways I felt it was an honour to be in his class. I was already good at geography, but I really enjoyed it in his class, and he brought the subject alive for me. I was good with art, and I would do drawings of different rock formations, say, or field systems, and that helped me get good marks in my geography, which pleased Brownlee. He also taught French and Latin and those were other subjects which I improved on. In that sense, I think he was a good teacher: if you responded to his teaching, he could get you to do good work and improve. But it was what happened when that didn't happen that meant his classes could be a nightmare.
38. There was a new teacher who arrived at the school, Miss Barrie. It turned out she had known my eldest brother when they were younger. She taught art and I really enjoyed her class. Brownlee completely spoiled it, though, as he would come and stand at the class doorway some days, as it was rumoured he had a crush on her. One day when she must have just started at the school he came in and announced to her that if any of the boys were misbehaving she was to feel free to send them to him and he would deal with them. That felt very invasive, as he had taken away what I saw as a safe place. She did go on to send out pupils to him. I don't remember being one, but I know others who were. Sometimes the boys might hide in the toilets to avoid Brownlee, but if he found them, he would take them to his class where they received their punishment and he would beat them on their backsides with the clacken.

39. I moved into the senior school, which is sited at Henderson Row. The media always use photographs or film of these buildings when they talk about Brownlee and his abuse. The problem is it was not the building where he taught, as he was at the prep school not the senior school.
40. As you look north at the building there are a range of classes on the left. I was taught in some of those classes, and that was also where the Rector had his office. The ephors also had a room there. At the back of the main central building was the dining hall and some more classrooms, where the junior years were based. Down the righthand side were the library and the gym.
41. When we were in the senior school there was an assembly held each morning. The Rector was the person who was supposed to lead this, but he was notorious for falling asleep and the school chaplain often ended up taking assembly instead.
42. In the senior school we had our form class at the start of the day and then we moved to different classes for whichever subject we were taught.
43. There was a boy who I was friendly with, and his father was the French teacher. Usually, I felt safe, but there were occasions when his father could fly off in a temper. I don't think he hit anyone, he just shouted.
44. When I was at the school I enjoyed music and took part in some of the school concerts. I can remember the school putting on an opera, but Mr Bowman, the music teacher, kept hearing something going wrong during the rehearsals. He kept stopping and breaking each group of the chorus down until he had worked out that the problem was me. My voice was beginning to break, and he immediately put me out of the class, without any care. It felt very brutal and it made me self-conscious about ever singing again, but my love of music was too strong for it to be crushed by his thoughtlessness about how this might affect a 12-year-old who had always been a good singer and enjoyed it.

Religious education

45. I was brought up as a Catholic but the school was all Protestant orientated. There were prayers, including the Our Father, which, because this was Church of Scotland, had slightly different wording to the Catholic version I knew; it always underlined how you were one step removed from what the school considered "correct". It made you feel like an outsider.

Sporting activities

46. Everyone at the school would be involved in some sort of sporting activity, but I tried my best to avoid that. The school was obsessed with sporting excellence and results tables and that meant rugby in the winter and spring terms and cricket in the summer.
47. There was also the game of hailes that was unique to Edinburgh Academy and was a little like shinty, played with a short wooden spoon-shaped bat called a clacken, where you scored goals by scooping up a ball and hitting it into the opposing team's net. It was a game that, in my time, was only played once a year by the most senior boys in the senior school, but in the prep school we played a softer version of it, called Clacken and Ball. Each pupil was given a clacken, which I remember we had to bring in on special days. Clacken and Ball was, I think, like a more elevated form of the egg and spoon race and would even be an event at the prep school games day, with some matches involving parents. The leading organisers of these events were Mr Brownlee and Mr Wares.

Discipline

48. During P3 and P4 any routine discipline was issued by either of the female teachers that I had. They were firm but fair in how they dealt with us. I can remember being hit on the hand with a ruler, that may have been by Mrs Baxter, for misbehaving when I was in P4 and more of the same in P5.

49. As far as other punishments, you may have been sent out of class and be told to stand in the corridor. I was sent out of class on a couple of occasions. I think this was because I was misbehaving. If other teachers saw you in the corridor they may have marked you as needing extra attention when they were to have you in their classes.
50. Any punishments in the prep school were kept within the school. I remember being sent to Mr Britton once in the prep school and fearing the very worst; instead, he gave me lines. In the upper school you would often be given lines. You might even be given detention to complete the lines.
51. When I went into the senior school I did not experience any corporal punishment. In the first year my form teacher was Mr IDZ [REDACTED] and I was in class [REDACTED]. In the second year my form teacher was Mr Harris and I was in class [REDACTED]. Mr Harris had no experience of teaching prior to arriving at Edinburgh Academy. It was his first employment out of training. He was only about 22 or 23, but luckily he was a really nice guy.
52. When I was at Henderson Row I was aware of Hamish Dawson. I am not sure if he taught me – although I increasingly think he did. If he did, I do not recall being the subject of his abuses, but everyone was aware of his reputation.
53. When I was in either first or second year in the senior school I had a [REDACTED] teacher, Mr IBP [REDACTED], who had a nickname of "IBP [REDACTED]" because of his enormous bulk. He also took some of the boys for rugby, which was ironic considering his size. I am not sure how many rugby fifteens the school had, but he was in charge of what was very definitely the bottom team.
54. One Saturday the school thought it would be a good idea for the bottom fifteen to take on a much higher team, from Heriot's. The problem was this would be the school that many of us would often be bullied by on the way home each night. There was no love lost between us and they thrashed us.

55. When we had been out at rugby practice and were heading to the showers afterwards Mr IBP [REDACTED] would be there, supposedly doing some sort of supervision. He would want to make sure each boy wasn't wearing any underwear while they got showered. He would stand and watch all the naked boys and start to get short of breath and excited as he stood there. He did nothing else to any of the boys in the showers.
56. When we were in Mr IBP [REDACTED]'s [REDACTED] class he had this habit of looming over you and almost smothering you with his build. Sometimes, as a form of punishment, he would have you stand up at the side of your desk and he would pull you into his body to give you a cuddle. That was awful as he was always sweating and smelling of body odour. He obviously knew how we viewed this as it was all done in a semi-joking kind of way, but it was definitely done to punish us.
57. On other occasions if he saw that you were having issues with some [REDACTED] problem he would come to your desk and have you sit on his lap, as he described what you should be doing. If that wasn't bad enough, there were also times when he would actually sit on your lap. He did that to me and other boys. It was done with a sense of jokey humour from him, but it never felt comfortable for us, and you could tell from his face that he was inappropriately excited by it.

Prefects / senior pupils / ephors

58. Ephors tended to be the more sporty boys in the school and were appointed by the Rector. Shortly before I joined the school, the ephors were permitted to hand out corporal punishment to pupils, but that had been discontinued. Standard punishments when I was in the senior school would involve doing lines or detention, but the ephors would on occasion pick on us younger boys, or at the very least fail to stop other older boys from bullying us. I tried to make sure, when I was out in the playground, that I was out of the view of the ephors. I was only in the senior school for just under two years.

Abuse at Edinburgh Academy

59. The gym hall in the prep school had a vaulting horse and some wooden climbing frames and rope climbing ladders. If the PE teacher, I can't remember his name, saw that you were not achieving his standards he would smack you on the bottom with a ping pong bat.
60. In the gym classes you wore blue shorts, a white top and plimsolls. The gym master had a rule that you were not allowed to wear underwear beneath your shorts. If he suspected you were wearing underwear he told you to lower your shorts so he could see. This was all done in front of everyone else in the class. You then had to remove your underwear and put your shorts back on. On some occasions if he was being particularly nasty he might tell another boy to take your shorts down. He wouldn't ask the boy to remove your underwear, you would always do that yourself.
61. The teacher was also into his boxing. As another type of punishment, he got one of the other boys to put on a boxing glove and hit the boy being punished in the face. I remember [REDACTED] being told to do that to someone. [REDACTED] enjoyed his boxing but he was visibly uncomfortable being made to hit another boy.
62. When I was in P4, I had not been in any of Mr Brownlee's classes, but I was aware of his reputation from other boys. I do know he taught Latin and geography. I remember being in the playground talking with a couple of my friends. There were always two teachers who patrolled the play areas and on this occasion I saw that Brownlee was on duty and was walking with Mr Wares. One of my friends pointed them out and said we had to be wary of them. He went on to describe some of the things that Wares would get up to in his class, especially his wandering hands. Anytime I saw Wares I would try my best to get away and not be anywhere near him. I was never taught by Wares, as far as I recall.
63. Another teacher at the prep school I was aware of who had a bad reputation was Mr Dyer. He would kick boys up the backside when they were in his class. It never happened to me, but I did see him do it. I think he was a prolific user of the clacken.

64. One time in P5 I was sent out of the class to stand in the corridor. This was the first time I had a problem with Mr Brownlee. He was a formidable teacher and appeared at the end of the corridor. He came along and said something like, "What do we have here?" He asked me why I had been sent out, but I am sure he knew that I had to have been misbehaving. He grabbed me by the ear and twisted it. He dragged me along the corridor away from the class. He transferred his grip from my ear to the collar of my shirt, then pressed his knuckles into the back of the neck at the base of my skull. He took me into an empty room and had me bend over, while he hit me with his clacken. I think he gave me two or three strokes with his clacken. When he hit me with the clacken it was on my backside, over my shorts. He told me that this should teach me not to be sent out of class again. I had been sent out before from the class, as had some of the other pupils, but I'd never received a beating for it.
65. After being hit with the clacken he dragged me back along the corridor and deposited me outside the class once more. He just left me crying. I can't recall if I went back into the class, saying nothing about what happened, or whether I had been left outside until the class ended, and moved onto my next class.
66. I know that similar and sometimes worse things happened to other boys. The chilling thing was that surely all the teachers had to have been aware of what was happening, and I include the nice teachers. Not only must they have been aware, but some must have facilitated this.
67. I can remember that when I was in Brownlee's class he would often punish boys by hitting them with the clacken, in front of the whole class. One day when I was in Brownlee's class, he was late coming into the room. We were waiting for him and half a dozen of us were all playing around, standing on our seats or desks, throwing a rubber at each other, kind of like catch. Suddenly everyone quietened down as they heard his heavy brogues walking along the corridor. I was still trying to get down from a desk as he entered the class. I knew I had been caught and I was in trouble. I thought he may have sent me to the headmaster for some lines, but on this occasion

he was going to make an example of me. He got me to the front of the class, and I knew what was going to happen. I had seen others being punished like this, but never experienced it myself, until then.

68. He made me stand in front of the class and bend over his desk. He retrieved his clacken, and I can recall not only being given three strokes of the clacken but being in a position that I could see that he was taking a couple of steps back on each occasion, to ensure he could put more strength behind the strokes. He was much taller than me, I was only a short eleven-year-old, and he still felt the need to use as much force as he could muster to hit me. The pain was bad enough, but the humiliation of being hit in front of my classmates was worse. When he was finished I was sent back to my seat. The rest of the class were staring at me or pointedly looking at the floor to avoid looking at me. Some were smirking, either because they didn't like me, or pleased it was not happening to them. You knew that it was the done thing not to cry, not to blub, but the pain was so bad you couldn't help yourself. Crying might mean the harder boys in the class could humiliate me afterwards.
69. I can remember another incident in the class involving Nicky Campbell. Nicky was one of three or four of the boys in the class who Brownlee would pick on, on a regular basis. He was being punished by Mr Brownlee for some misdemeanour. He was made to bend over but this time he was to face the class. Brownlee could not find his clacken and instead grabbed a table tennis bat. He then beat Nicky with the bat. Nicky didn't break into tears but just stared back at us, grinning and gurning and pulling funny faces; he was not letting Brownlee get the better of him. I remember thinking: "What on earth is he playing at? Is he mad?" If Brownlee had seen Nicky's face he would have gone into overdrive.
70. Another of the issues with Brownlee was that he would sometimes throw chalk dusters at us. He was a very good cricketer and I think this helped him aim so he would usually just miss you, but not always. I imagine that those times he hit you, he really meant to.

Reporting of abuse at Edinburgh Academy

71. There was no member of staff I could approach to tell what happened. The school instilled in everyone that you did not clipe on anybody for anything that happened at the school. Even if there was someone to talk to, I am not sure whether they would have been interested or would simply have shrugged it off. When you grow up in that kind of system, you don't really understand what is acceptable or not. All you know is that this is what happens and that this is the way it is. And we didn't have the kind of language, as 9-, 10- or 11-year-olds, to properly talk about what was being done to us.
72. I can remember there was a time I was off school ill. On the Friday of that week my mother got me out of bed to take me out for some fresh air. We went for a walk on the Blackford Hills, up to the observatory. When we got up to the top, I saw Brownlee walking over the brow of the hill. It dawned on me that they had agreed to meet there. My mother sent me ahead of them. I was looking back and saw them talking, and although I couldn't hear them, their discussion went on for some time but was not heated. If anything, I could see him being smarmy in his attitude to her, obviously trying to charm her. I asked my mum afterwards what it was about and the only thing she would say was that it had been to do with me. I have thought about this over the years and I have always found it disquieting, even more so now we have heard more about Brownlee. I really wonder if she may have confronted him about the beatings. She did, after all, take my eldest brother out of his first school because of the terrible treatment to which he was subjected. I was never beaten after that and did not have Brownlee as a teacher for much longer after that anyway. The only way I can think she found anything out was if I'd told someone about the clacken and they had then told my mother. Because she died when I was 13, I was never able to find out more.

Leaving Edinburgh Academy

73. In April 1971 I left to be a boarder at Ampleforth College in England, as my brothers had done. I had to sit the common entrance exam to get into the school. It would

have been helpful if I had been offered some assistance with that by the Edinburgh Academy, as it was a completely different education system and a different curriculum. The Academy had the attitude that as I was leaving I could just get on with it. I had to be segregated from the other boys and along with an invigilator, I was the only person in the library as I completed the exam over a couple of days. I had to do about a dozen different papers. I knew that my life at the Academy was at an end, but, apart from leaving friends, I did not feel any sadness at having to go.

Life after Edinburgh Academy

74. About nine months before I left the Academy, my mum and dad divorced, which caused even more turmoil in my life. In my last term at Edinburgh Academy, the family home was sold and my mum bought another house and we moved in there in March 1971. In the April my mother took myself and my next elder brother to Waverley Station and we were sent off to the boarding school in England.
75. I had been to the school on a couple of occasions when we had previously visited my older brother there. When I arrived at the school I was homesick and would cry myself to sleep each night. I think I was also suffering from a sense of abandonment. It certainly felt very new, very alien and very unsettling.
76. I had only been there for six days when my housemaster called me into his study to tell me that my mother had died. She had been suffering from angina and while waiting at the bus stop to get home from shopping in town she collapsed from a heart attack. I believe she died on the way to hospital. My brother and I were obviously shellshocked from this news. When we came back to Edinburgh for the funeral I stayed with my best friend from the Academy for a few days and then returned to boarding school.
77. That whole week was utterly surreal. I was desperately sad, traumatised and alone but just had to "get on with it." I learned to disassociate myself from whatever was bad in life, and this refusal to engage with negative things, to accept them rather

than tackle them head-on, is something that has blighted my life ever since. Aged 13, my life quickly divided between boarding school, where I had a good, tight circle of friends and a life, and holidays back home in Edinburgh, where I cut myself off from previous friendships and was largely left to fend for myself.

78. When I was at the boarding school I did not suffer any abuse from the monks or lay staff as most of the abuse was usually directed at pupils in the prep and junior schools – exactly the same 6- to 12-year-old age group that suffered most at the Academy and other private schools. Some of the pupils who were my age would describe some of the abuse they suffered whilst they had been in the junior schools.
79. Towards the end of my time there I was consciously uncoupling from the school. I did not do well in my A-Levels and even surprised myself how badly I did. I was seventeen when my time at the school was coming to an end. I can recall one of the monks driving me to the train station and telling me my life starts now. He was a really good bloke and one of the few monks there who had any real experience of the real world outside the monastery. He told me to go off and live my life and not look back.
80. When I left the school I returned to live in Edinburgh and had no wish to continue in further education: I felt it could do nothing for me and for a while I signed on the dole. I managed to get some odd jobs, like working in a record shop and pubs.
81. I then hung out with an up-and-coming band in Edinburgh and did some touring, working as their sound man. I was also making some of my own music.
82. During this time I would do everything I could to try to hide my past. Pretty well no one I knew shared my background, my schooling. I felt deeply uncomfortable at “being posh” and having been to a leading boarding school but felt I had no real connection with my past life in Edinburgh and found it difficult to feel at ease with people. Boarding school only allowed for three outcomes: university, daddy’s business or the army. Having opted out of all that, I felt very adrift and it took more

than a decade to find my feet and begin to feel more comfortable in my own skin.

83. In my mid-twenties I got a job via the Manpower Services Commission, which was a job training scheme. I was an office administrator with a community newspaper. It was a free monthly newspaper, which had an ethos of taking people off the dole and giving them a chance of learning some working skills. I took that chance and eventually became a reporter with them. After a while I moved to being the editor of a sister title in Leith.
84. There were several of these local newspapers and there was always a fight for funding. I was involved in setting up a network to better negotiate with the council for grants, and also trying to get money from Europe. I was in my late-20's, fulfilled and enjoying myself. It was a really great experience and taught me so much, and I felt devastated when the funding came to an end. I worked for a media charity for a few years but then went on to work at the Edinburgh Evening News, and the Scotsman before becoming a senior sub editor for [REDACTED].
85. I had met the woman who would become my wife at the community newspaper I used to edit and she went on to become a leading newspaper writer, first in Scotland and then in London. We moved to London 26 years ago and, having been together for 11 years, eventually got married and had two children. My wife is a newspaper columnist and I have recently taken early retirement after a 25-year career as a senior production editor on Fleet Street.
86. Later in life I learned more about the abuse that happened at my school in England through the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales. Just as at the Academy, some of the monks responsible for abuse at Ampleforth were moved to different areas and some went on to abuse more people. I was also aware, around that time, of Alex Renton releasing his book on abuse in private schools and was perplexed to find he did not mention this school and there was only a passing mention of Edinburgh Academy. I assume there were legal limitations on what he could say at the time.

87. Earlier, in 2001, Iain Glen came out with details that he had been abused when he was at Edinburgh Academy. I had known Iain very well as he was in my year and he was best friends with my best friend there. My understanding about this was that Edinburgh Academy shut those allegations down and there was some sort of Non-Disclosure Agreement made. He suffered a lot of negative reaction from former Academicals who were adamant that what he alleged had ever taken place.
88. It was after Nicky Campbell's disclosures in 2023 that things changed. The stuff that Nicky was revealing struck a chord with me as I could remember some of them happening to him in front of me as he was in the same class as me. I decided that I should come forward to the Inquiry and to the police. There was a certain fear that had to be overcome so that I and others could be in a position to tell our stories.

Impact

89. As a result of my largely solitary childhood coupled with my experiences at Edinburgh Academy and the loss of my mother I became self-focussed at the boarding school and my attention shifted from academic work to having a good time with a tight group of friends.
90. In the first six months or so at boarding school I blanked everything from my mind that had occurred before my mum's death. I found it impossible to conjure an image of her in my mind, and I increasingly felt distanced from her, what she meant and what place I had in it all. It took me decades to begin to get over this and it still affects me today.
91. In some ways, the Inquiry has acted for me as a torch to throw light on some of the darkness surrounding my earlier years and it has helped me rediscover a lot about myself from when I was a child. While that has been useful in gaining more understanding of who I am, some of it has also been extremely unsettling, if not upsetting.

92. In the past few years, I have been looking back at the abuse I suffered at Edinburgh Academy and analysing what happened at the boarding school I attended. I had been speaking to various people about this type of abuse and I felt they never really understood the effect it had on people, not just the victims who were very obviously damaged by their experiences, but all the others who were caught up in it. I didn't need them to sympathise with how damaged or otherwise I might have been as an individual – it wasn't about me – but to understand that this kind of abuse is real, it touches thousands and thousands of people and that it can have truly devastating effects. The lucky ones among us may escape relatively unscathed, but the kind of abuse we suffered can totally ruin lives.
93. Hearing about and reading the statements given to this Inquiry and the one for England and Wales has convinced me that the only way to stop the abuse is to bring it kicking and screaming into the light of public scrutiny. As someone who had experienced it at first-hand, even though I recognise that the abuse I suffered was not nearly as bad as that experienced by others, I felt it vital to show solidarity with those who had already come forward but also to add my voice and to say I witnessed it.
94. One effect that I did not expect is that the more I have learned, the more angry I am that such abuse could be allowed to flourish. The abusers, in their various ways, abused the children of course, but the schools compounded that by abusing the trust of their charges and the parents who gave them that charge. It is truly a scandal.
95. I have come to realise that the experiences you have as a child, your home life, your school life, have a deep-seated impact on you as an adult. My encounters with teachers at Edinburgh Academy taught me a lifelong distrust of authority figures. Where there might also have been an accompanying fear, that is being replaced by contempt for those people who abused us as small children. I have always felt that elite private schools are indefensible in a modern-day society. The evidence coming out of abuse inquiries underlines just how morally repugnant they can be too.

Treatment/support

96. During my life I have suffered from two separate bouts of depression. I was prescribed medication to help cope with this. The first bout lasted a couple of years but the second time lasted a bit longer. As part of the recovery, I was seeing a counsellor, but during those sessions, for some reason, while lots of other stuff about childhood came up, the Academy never really did. I had known about abuse at my boarding school but at that time did not class what happened to me at the Academy in quite the same light. It is only latterly that I have recognised that the beatings I received were abuse.

Reporting of Abuse

97. I was working one day last year when I saw a story the paper I worked for was going to run on abuse at Edinburgh Academy. It was by Alex Renton, so I contacted him and he gave me the email address for Nicky Campbell. I woke up early the next morning, unable to sleep, and typed out a number of pages about my experiences. I then emailed it to Nicky and within twenty minutes he phoned me back. He suggested that I contact the police.
98. Within the next three days I reported the abuse from Brownlee to the police working on Operation Treefrog. As well as documenting my own experiences, I felt that it was important that I provide corroboration for the evidence they may already have from others. I gave a statement to the police in December 2023, and I appeared as a witness at the Examination of Facts in the case against John Brownlee in Edinburgh in March 2024. I think, in the circumstances, the guilty findings were the best we were going to achieve.
99. For the survivors I think this was cathartic, with a sense that someone had taken notice of it at last. The case was thoroughly investigated, and the evidence was so evidently clear. The Sheriff made comments that there were some inconsistencies,

which helped negate any thoughts of collusion between the witnesses who, in any case, were from such a wide spread of years.

Records

100. I applied for what records the Edinburgh Academy had for me. I got a note of my form teachers and two scans, one of which was my parents' application for me to join the Academy and the other was a document from after I had joined, which had been signed by my parents. I did not keep any of my school reports and I suspect they would have been disposed of after my mother's death. Nevertheless, it really is astonishing that the school should have no other records of my eight years in their care.

Lessons to be Learned

101. I recently read a statement on the Inquiry website from a witness, a former teacher at the Academy. In his statement he makes mention that Arboretum's headmaster, Jim Britton, told a staff meeting in October 1971 that he wanted to abolish corporal punishment in the school. The proposal was put to the teachers who then voted it down. The leading teachers corralling opinion in the school at that time included John Brownlee and Iain Wares, among other abusers. They were the ones given a vote on whether or not they could continue to abuse little boys.
102. In [REDACTED] 197[REDACTED], I had just joined Class [REDACTED] at the prep school, under the control of John Brownlee. Others were in another class, suffering the attentions of their form master, Iain Wares. If the teachers had followed the proposal from the headteacher, there is every chance that much of the subsequent abuse that has been presented to the Inquiry would never have happened. At the very least it would have been identified, reported, and decisively acted upon.

103. Banning corporal punishment in October 1971 might have been too late to stop either of those men abusing previous pupils, but there is every chance that it might have saved my classmates and me – and all the rest to follow – from years of appalling abuse. I found this profoundly shocking. It is clear evidence of the Academy's historic failure to safeguard the wellbeing of its pupils.
104. I am also aware that subsequent to working at Edinburgh Academy, Wares went on to be employed at Fettes College after being given a glowing reference from Mr Britton. I always thought Mr Britton to be a benign figure and fairly liberal. I have since found out that he was either completely ineffective, with all that was going on, or he actually enabled some truly awful abuse at the Academy, and at Fettes. I am angry with him for that and I can never forgive him. At his leaving speech to the school in the summer of 1973 (as reported in the Chronicle), Mr Britton praised Iain Wares, knowing full well what he had done.
105. At the Academy, like all boarding schools, the housemaster was treated like a god. The problem was the Academy had the likes of Brownlee, who was thrashing everybody, and Dawson, who was sticking his hands wherever he wanted.
106. There are many people in society who gravitate towards positions of looking after people in care. In my life that could have been as a teacher or as a housemaster. There should not be an assumption that everything is okay; there should always be an understanding that things can go wrong. We must always understand that children are precious and vulnerable. They are not to be used as commodities that you can monetise.
107. In my day, teachers were coming into the Academy straight from university and without proper training or qualifications, purely because they had been to a good school or had rowed at Cambridge. In the Academy, up to at least the 1970's if not beyond, they were left to get on with it, without adequate backup or any consideration of safeguarding or accountability; they were left to run things as they saw fit. And many of them were not fit to run things.

108. Private schools charge a huge amount of money, and I don't think they provide any better education than that provided by properly funded normal state schools. It has to be recognised that those private schools are, first and foremost, businesses run with the express purpose of making money. I think the state system is much better regulated. There are many more checks and balances in place, not least of which is proper oversight by properly accountable authorities rather than self-appointed boards of governors.
109. Some of the private schools are coming out with statements about abuse having occurred many decades before, but that it is not happening now. I don't believe all the abuse has gone away. In England and Wales, after the Inquiry the boarding school I attended was effectively put under special measures and told it could not accept any more pupils, all because there was not enough in place in relation to safeguarding. I would hope that there is more safeguarding in private schools and I know some schools have been very proactive on this front.
110. But just because we live in 2024, we must not be complacent enough to think that everything is so much better now than it used to be, that the abuse that I and others suffered could not be still taking place. Abuse will always take place if it is allowed to. At the Academy, the abusers kept on abusing because they were allowed to; they knew there was nothing effective in place to stop them.
111. The Academy has been allowing former pupils to talk to current pupils about the abuse that happened in the past, and I think this is a great thing. It will help today's pupils understand abuse better and hopefully feel more able to report anything. If today's Edinburgh Academy pupils might, as is inexplicably so often the case, become the parents of tomorrow's pupils, at least they can never stick their heads in the sand and pretend that they never knew how horribly wrong things can go if they are hushed up and hidden from view.
112. But without the proper training of teachers and rigorous monitoring of staff working in schools, all that understanding will only amount to a rather unpleasant lesson in social history. There must be mandatory reporting of any suspected abuse, with the

police being involved at an early stage and the relevant authorities alerted. And, in the case of private schools in particular, if things ever go wrong like this they should be dragged out into the open and made to feel the pain where it really hurts them: loss of face, loss of reputation, loss of income.

Other information

113. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..........

Dated..... 30 September 2024