

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

IRI [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My full name is IRI [REDACTED]. This has been my name since birth. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1972.

Life at home

2. I was born at Western General Hospital in Edinburgh in 1972. My father was English and my mother Maltese. They moved to Edinburgh from Suffolk in 1970 because of my dad's job. When I was born, my dad was an English teacher and mother a homemaker. I have an older brother and sister.
3. I still remember the entry interview for Edinburgh Academy, aged four.

Edinburgh Academy Junior School

4. I started Edinburgh Academy as a day pupil when I was four years old. I was the youngest in my year group. I don't remember that being an issue. Mrs Durbin was my teacher for my first year and Mrs Reed for the second. Mrs Reed was a bit warmer.
5. I was in Denham Green for my first two years, aged four to six. Then I was in Arboretum from six to ten years old, which was the prep school part. My first prep school teacher was Mrs Cairns followed by Mrs Baxter, Mr Brownlee and Mr

IJW. My memory is a fond one of effective teachers and it was a happy time there.

6. Mr James Burnett was the headmaster of the prep school. He also taught me to play the chanter. He used to tell us stories about being posted overseas and being in Singapore so he must have been in the army. He would always say "Namaste" before lessons, and was quite a charismatic character.
7. Mr Brownlee was my form teacher in my third year at Arboretum. He coined the nickname "IRI" for me which was then my nickname for the rest of my time there.
8. Edinburgh Academy was a day school that also had boarders. As a day pupil I didn't know who was a day pupil and who was a boarder because we had exactly the same day at school. I did know that IDX-IDY ran the boarding house, and they were friends with my mum and dad.

Routine in Junior School

9. In my first two years at the school, my mum would take me to school. You would go inside, hang your coat up on a little hook and then have class with Mrs Durbin. My mum made me perpetually late so I told Mrs Durbin a story about how I was late because my mum was milking the cows, which she then asked my mum about. We recall that as a funny story.
10. In Arboretum, We would have assembly in the morning. Some of the boys in the junior school were called "odds" and I think they were the boys who had lunch at home. We didn't have any prefects in the prep school.

Schooling

11. Edinburgh Academy had a very traditional education system, which suited me well. I was generally happy in the first two years at Denham Green, with the structure of the

lessons. By my second year at Arboretum, when I was 7-8 years old, I became aware of something called "Dux," which I think means leader in Latin, and it meant one was at the top of the class and I was generally in that group. I was quite articulate and got the lead in the school play about [REDACTED]

12. If you were musical at the school then you learned to play the violin or piano. If you weren't very musical, then you learned the bagpipes. I learned the bagpipes. Mr Burnett, the headmaster, taught me to play.

Discipline

13. I don't remember there being anything much about discipline when I was at Arboretum. I don't remember corporal punishment being used at all in the junior school.

Edinburgh Academy Senior School

14. I went to senior school aged ten, which was at Henderson Row. That was my final year at the academy before I left in the summer of 1981 when I was aged eleven.
15. The first year boys in senior school were called the Geits and were in a separate building, the 19th Century Donaldson's Building which was beside the main building where the senior boys were. We were a bit protected from the older boys. It was a soft transition to the main school.
16. Mr Drew was my form master in my final year and had a pastoral role. He was alright and quite approachable. His nickname was Nancy Drew, which was probably because he was suspected to be gay. The other teacher I remember was my history teacher, Hamish Dawson, whom we boys called "Dotty Dawson."

17. The only memory I have of prefects were the Ephors we had in senior school, and I was a bit aware of them from morning assembly because they were seventeen, eighteen year old men compared to us.

Routine at Edinburgh Academy

18. I walked to school in the morning. I have been back as an adult, and it quite a beautiful, magical walk. We went to the main senior school building on Henderson Row for assembly in the morning, then went to Donaldson's Building, adjacent for the rest of the day.

Schooling

19. Moving to the senior school when I was about ten years old felt like a big thing because that is when you start moving from class to class for different subjects, instead of sitting in one class. I loved biology, chemistry and the sciences by this time. The lessons I remember the most, though, are my lessons with Hamish Dawson who taught us history. He was a very good story teller and history teacher.
20. Mr Drew was my form teacher as well as Geography teacher and our time with him was quite general and not subject related. He made us do an exercise about who the four to six boys in the class you would most like to be on a desert island with, and who were the four to six boys we would least like to be stuck with. I was the only person that came up in both groups, so I was obviously a bit Marmite. It's quite funny now but I remember at the time thinking it was divisive.
21. I remember learning about sexual reproduction in biology when I was about eleven years old. Miss Bland was the teacher. It was simply about the biology of sexual reproduction, and nothing about boundaries or the emotions around sex.

22. The standard of education at Edinburgh Academy was quite high. I moved on to an English boarding school when I was eleven years old and I was way ahead of my peers in science there because of the schooling I received in Edinburgh.

Sport

23. We played rugby but I was terrible at sport; so was in the 4th team. I played matches. I remember an apocryphal story when Edinburgh Academy played against Glasgow Academy where Edinburgh Academy would claim to be the "crème de la crème" and they would say "aye, rich and thick."
24. Sport was quite important at the school but I think because I left at eleven years old, it didn't matter so much that I wasn't great at rugby. I don't remember being super worried about it at the time.

Discipline

25. When I moved to Geits in my first year at senior school, there was definitely more talk about the clacken being used as punishment by teachers to beat boys with if you got in trouble. I think there was a formal structure around misdemeanours and punishments, and knowing that you would be punished. I think we may have been told this in assembly when we started senior school. Mr Drew would have also told us in form class at the start of the year. There was a fear about it because you knew there was a possibility you would be hit.
26. I don't know if the school had any point system or recording system for misdemeanours and punishments. There must have been lines and detention and a build up to getting hit, but I can't recall exactly.
27. I left Edinburgh Academy when I was eleven years old.

Abuse at Edinburgh Academy

28. The only teacher I was aware of who used the clacken or any corporal punishment in senior school was Hamish Dawson. He had a reputation in the senior school for being into corporal punishment. He had something that was like an umbrella stand in his class that was full of implements that he used to hit boys with. There were canes, clackens and massive, cardboard tubes that he had decorated.
29. His classes were different from the others. He was a great story teller and engaged the boys, so his classes were subversive. It was well known that if you got in trouble in his class then you would be beaten in front of the other boys with one of his implements. Dawson managed to make it humorous when he beat a boy and the other boys would laugh.
30. For some reason, I was the one in his class who got picked out to be beaten the most. I got hit for getting top marks in tests in class. He would say that out loud when he called me to get my punishment, so it was like he was being playful because he was turning the normal order of things on its head. He would beat me in front of the class for getting top marks and other boys would be laughing, which may have been a nervous thing. It was like a Pied Piper effect because his classes were different from the norm and he was so charismatic.
31. Dawson would call me up to hit me in nearly every class, so likely once a week. He would pick different implements each time and would hit me on the backside with them, over my clothes. There was some hilarity around it because you wouldn't know if it was going to hurt or not but you knew it wouldn't be brutal. It did hurt slightly sometimes but I never felt fearful. He did that to other boys too but mostly to me. He would also sometimes call another boy up to do the hitting, so it was almost funny. It did also have a dark side and was very confusing for me
32. It was very clever because Dawson was creating a carnival atmosphere used to soften social rules. He was creating something out of the ordinary and different from

the norm, so it made it humorous and funny, and so it allowed him to then do other things that were out of the norm. It was grooming and in hindsight very manipulative.

33. Being punished also involved sitting on Dawson's lap. He would say to me, "you're acres and acres of tickly, [REDACTED]" as he put his hand under my shirt on my bare skin and felt me all over. I don't remember him touching my genitals but it was certainly intrusive. It made me feel very uncomfortable. This happened about once a week during my history lesson and it happened in plain sight in front of all the other boys. That didn't happen to any other boy in my class. I spoke to my friend, about it years later and he said it didn't happen to him and didn't recall it happening to me either.
34. I didn't really understand what was happening at the time and don't remember talking about it to any of the other boys or adults. I didn't feel any fear of going back to his class. The impact was very insidious. I remember every detail of those history classes with Dawson, but I remember little or nothing about the rest of that whole school year, so I must have had a very heightened sense of what was happening in those classes.
35. Nothing happened to me outside of the history class because I was not a boarder.

Reporting of abuse at Edinburgh Academy

36. I didn't talk to any adult about the beatings from Dawson or sitting on his lap at the time. I don't remember other boys talking to each other either.
37. I didn't tell any adult about it at the time because of the way it was done, so I didn't think of it as abuse at the time. It was confusing. If I had been more worried at the time then the person I would have spoken to would have been Mr Drew, my form teacher. He was quite approachable.

Leaving Edinburgh Academy

38. My dad got a job as a headmaster in an English school in 1981 so we were moving down to England. I was offered a scholarship to stay at Edinburgh Academy as a boarder. My parents thought long and hard about it but they eventually decided against it. I think the reason for that was just that they thought it would be too far from them and too big a change for me.
39. I left Edinburgh Academy when I was eleven years old after finishing my first academic year in the senior school. Generally speaking, Edinburgh Academy was good and I enjoyed my time there.

Life after Edinburgh Academy

40. I moved down to England with my family when I was eleven years old because my dad got a job as a headmaster in an English boarding school. My brother and sister also left to go to university and I was sent to a different boarding school for two years. It was a time of huge transition for me.
41. I hated my time at the boarding school and wanted to leave after the first week, but I had to stay. I was homesick and felt displaced having moved countries, moved school and being made to board away from my parents. I think it was an odd decision for my parents to have made. My dad thought sending me to a different school, instead of the one where he worked, would toughen me up. I think it was just the done thing from a status perspective for them, even though it wasn't the best decision for me.
42. I did well at the boarding school even though it was a failing school. I was way ahead of the other boys there because the standard of education at Edinburgh Academy had been much higher.

- 43. I then moved on to another boarding school in England when I was thirteen years old and did well there academically. After my schooling, I studied medicine. I worked in the NHS for a time and now work in private practice. I have a very busy but enjoyable job.
- 44. I live in London with my partner. We have a happy, settled life.

Impact

- 45. I am careful not to over attribute impact to what happened with Dawson because it is part of a bigger jigsaw of my experiences, but it did disturb me later in ways I didn't realise at the time. I was ten and eleven years old and so several years before my puberty and something sexual was happening that I didn't understand. It made me very uncomfortable and I developed an odd awareness of my body that I had never had before. I am aware that it changed my sense of self at a key time in my life.
- 46. When I went to boarding school in England for two years directly after leaving the Academy, I was quite disturbed and ran away a lot. I think possibly that was because something sexually had happened that shouldn't have happened and I couldn't make sense of it at that age. It was a time of huge transition in my life anyway with moving to England and going to boarding school, and the experiences with Dawson added another layer of vulnerability to my development.
- 47. I am gay and had some decades of early adult life not being able to sustain stable relationships. I think that is very shame based, and I think the Hamish Dawson experience contributed to that. It made my sense of myself as a sexual person, harder, which in turn made physical and emotional intimacy harder for me. It reduced my ability to sustain relationships.
- 48. I have thought a lot about why Dawson picked me. I was very articulate as a child and also precocious with it, and I was picked to be the lead for [REDACTED]. Being gay I wonder if there was something to do with gender non-conformity that I

was picked to be the lead in the play, because I didn't quite fit in with the rest of the boys. It makes me wonder whether Dawson identified that in me and picked me out, and perhaps the other boys didn't question it because they also also saw me as different.

49. It is shocking to think that Hamish Dawson worked at Edinburgh Academy for so many years, and with so many boys in each year, and managed to get away with it. I have thought about it over the years and wondered if anything happened to other boys. I used to do internet searches about Academy to see if anything had been published because I always expected it would, and then it did. I think people of my age group are coming forward to speak about their experiences because their parents are dying. I would never tell my parents about what happened to me because it would be far too upsetting for them. I have spoken to my siblings about it recently.
50. I have had general psychotherapy over the years.

Reporting of Abuse

51. I have never reported any of my experiences at Edinburgh Academy to anybody. I have not considered speaking to the police or a lawyer. I don't feel the need to.

Records

52. I have school reports and old jotters from Edinburgh Academy, including the Edinburgh Academy Chronicle from 1984 which contains details of Hamish Dawson. His implements of punishment are noted in it as "his menagerie of curious instruments of correction, such as the Idleness Inhibitor." It also describes his retirement and states that he is now "working with adults". It would appear that he left Edinburgh Academy around Christmas time in 1983, which is [REDACTED] after I left, and went to England where he was working with adults.

Final thoughts

53. My dad had gone to boarding school as a child and hated it, but then sent me to one and I hated it. I would be taken back to the boarding school even after running away. I look back and wonder why were all these privileged people sending their children off to these places. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to see that they were poorly regulated institutions with no safeguarding.
54. A lot of people of my generation are starting to talk about things now, perhaps because their parents are dying. At the time, people were afraid to talk for fear of upsetting their parents. On the few occasions when people have spoken about telling their parents, the parents didn't want to know. I think it was status anxiety insofar as they didn't want their child to be the one who rocked the boat and created a problem. There was also a social scene amongst boarding school staff in Edinburgh where they all knew each other. Fee paying schools rely on their reputation and had a lot invested in pretending everything was fine. Anything about abuse coming out would be the kiss of death for them. It was a bit like the Catholic Church with moving abusers on to another place without any proper safeguarding procedures in place. It is important now that people who have been impacted by abuse, some in very severe ways, are now able to talk about it and that as a society we allow them to talk about it.
55. Access to parents through phones, internet, social media has made things so different for boarding school children now because they can speak to their parents whenever they like. I think children now are much better informed about what is right and wrong, and much more empowered about speaking out when something wrong does happen.

Lessons to be Learned

56. I never received any age appropriate lessons around boundaries and what was comfortable at Edinburgh Academy. I think if we had then one of the pupils would have spoken up about what was happening.
57. 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.....
13 September 2023