

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Angus REID

Support person present: No

1. My name is Angus Marsham Reid. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1966. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before boarding school

2. I was born in Oxford. At that time my father was a junior doctor, and my mother was a nurse. [REDACTED] When I was about seven years old my father took up a new position and we moved to South London.
3. In London I was sent to first to a local state primary school, and then to DCPS, a local private primary school. Although the school had boarders. I was a day pupil and I really enjoyed my time there as it had a very good art and drama departments. I was shy, but I thrived at that. I finished primary school when I was still 12 and I was given an art scholarship to Dulwich College. However, my father accepted a new job as a consultant surgeon at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and we moved to Scotland.
4. Prior to us making the move I sat a scholarship exam, and I was interviewed by Larence Ellis, the Rector. I sat that in the staff room at my own school. I was (to my surprise) given an academic scholarship to the Academy.

Edinburgh Academy

5. I came to Edinburgh Academy in 1979 and boarded for a term at Mackenzie House. I had never been away from my family before. I did not know anyone in the school, and I had never been to Scotland. Thereafter I was a day pupil until the summer of 1984.
6. At Mackenzie House the boarders were aged, I think, between 12 and 14. Mackenzie House itself was an old ramshackle building on Kinnear Road. I can remember there was a big day room in the house where we could play records. There were playing fields behind the house. John Lister was the House Master at Mackenzie House and taught Classics. He lived in the same building with his wife. It became apparent from the first day that the boys were as much in control in the House as any of the staff. There were other teachers who also stayed in Mackenzie House, but I can't recall their names.

Routine at Edinburgh Academy

First day

7. I did not see my parents all term. One of the people I met at Mackenzie House was [REDACTED], who was in my year, but not my classes. He was fully aware what boarding life was like as his parents worked abroad and he had boarded for years.

Mornings and bedtime

8. We had to be at the school for about 8.30 am, with lessons starting at 8.55 am. The school day ended at 3.05 pm and if I was not involved in games or activities I would head home. When I was in the boarding house I would walk back after any afternoon activities. Lights out in the dormitory was around 10.30 pm when one of the teachers came round and turned the lights off. After lights out there was no supervision by any staff during the night. I can remember, around Christmas, that after lights out there

was a dangerous game played by gangs of boarders: they roved the dormitories and one would hyper ventilate until he passed out as a dare.

Leisure time

9. The main memory of my term boarding was of intense loneliness, but I formed a bond with a piano teacher, Bryn Turley, the only adult with whom I had one to one lessons.

Schooling

10. When I first went to the Academy there was no art or drama tuition, although there were occasional school plays. There was no sex education whatsoever. The ethos was academic, but dominated by games. The classes were very large and impersonal, the discipline was severe with threats of corporal punishment, and this was a shock to me. It seemed old fashioned and to cultivate an air of hostility between pupils and teachers.
11. I owe the school, however, the experience of acting in school plays, and being taught art by Mark Cheverton in my last years. Mark was appointed some years after I started, and his art department was something completely new, and a haven. I was among the first group ever to receive an A at A-level art, and it was there that I received the sound teaching that laid the foundation of my later career as an artist.
12. Academically, the school aimed to accelerate students to perform a year ahead of their peers in other schools. I was almost a year younger than my classmates, so when I took A levels I was only 16 and was deemed 'too young' to go to university, and simply sat them again. The second time round I already had the grades and dropped most subjects to the chagrin of my teachers, all except art, which was a joy. I learned printmaking, drawing and painting.

Personal possessions

13. I did not have any personal items when I stayed as a boarder.

External Inspections

14. There appeared to be no oversight of Edinburgh Academy when I was there either in the senior school or boarding houses. I cannot recall any inspections during my time, and certainly no visit by police or social workers.

Discipline

15. It is only now that I realise the kind of abuse that my peers at the school had been put through. They never spoke about it. I had no contact with John Brownlee as he was a teacher in the junior school. I was never taught by Ian Wares, thank heavens, and only briefly by Hamish Dawson. I intensely disliked Dawson, and was astonished by the threats of physical punishment he made in the classroom. No such thing had existed in my previous school, and I did my best to avoid him. But he was not alone. Such threats were also made by other teachers, with some relish.

Abuse at Edinburgh Academy

16. In Mackenzie House I was one of four people in a dormitory. The others in my dormitory were [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], and we were all in the same year group. The set up of the room did not give a homely feeling. In my time as a boarder I witnessed the regular sexual abuse of [REDACTED] by [REDACTED] after lights out. I could tell that [REDACTED] did not want him in his bed, but that didn't stop [REDACTED] abusing him. I could hear [REDACTED] being really aggressive and it was obvious he was forcing himself on [REDACTED]. There was definitely nothing mutual about what was happening. This happened on a regular basis, once a week or so. [REDACTED] had the bed between mine and [REDACTED]'s, and I never recall him doing or saying anything about it. I was [REDACTED]'s friend but we never spoke about it.

17. One night [REDACTED] approached me after lights out. I was terrified and ready to fight him off as best I could, but he made do with mocking the way my bed smelled. [REDACTED] never went for [REDACTED] as they were friends.
18. In my experience of the subsequent years as a day boy there was a culture of routine homophobic bullying was extreme and tolerated throughout the school. Coming as I had from a primary school in London, where homosexuality had been de-criminalised in 1968 and where a charismatic drama teacher was openly gay, this was at first a shock to me.
19. This attitude towards homosexuality was a sort of neurotic contradiction as it turns out that teachers were involved in sexual abuse of same sex pupils and there were members of staff who were gay, I suspect. However, any open discussion about sexuality just didnt happen even before Thatcher's homophobic Clause 28 of 1988. The widespread climate of homophobia in Scottish culture at the time is, in my view, no excuse.
20. There was a pupil, [REDACTED] who was rumoured to have kissed another boy. I have no idea if this was true, but [REDACTED] was totally ostracised. This culture of scapegoating a vulnerable individual was endemic, and damaging to [REDACTED]. I have no idea what his subsequent life was like, but the school owes him an apology.
21. Homophobic bullying, however, was only a small part of a much wider ethos of bullying that was endemic in the school and which [REDACTED] was an extreme victim of. He had been to [REDACTED] and then switched to the Academy in 198[REDACTED] and although two years older than me, he was admitted into the same year as me, sharing some of the same classes. He left, I believe, in 198[REDACTED].
22. [REDACTED] was a vulnerable individual. He had had a brain tumour in late childhood, [REDACTED] and the stigma never left him. This vulnerability meant that at Scottish private schools he was uniquely a target for aggression, and neither school cared remotely about it nor was equipped to deal

with it. Pastoral care wasn't on the map. When he attended [REDACTED] he was physically and verbally abused by those around him. He never spoke about it to me, but this must have been why he moved to the Academy.

23. At [REDACTED] he had been christened '[REDACTED]' on arrival, and this way of taunting him spread to the entire school and followed him to Edinburgh Academy. Pupils from all years, senior and junior, used that abusive name to taunt him, and by association me, and some still refer to him like that even today. He was regularly chased, his school case thrown over fences or its contents sprayed across the schoolyard, as well as physically abused by other boys. At that time, he had suicidal thoughts.
24. I cannot remember a single instance of such bullying being called out or punished. Rather, it was the ethos that thrived in the school. The impact of admitting girls to the sixth form was negligible from my perspective, and did nothing whatsoever to counterbalance the culture, as is claimed in the Closing Submissions for the Edinburgh Academy of 28th August 2023.
25. [REDACTED] left the school [REDACTED]. During the time he attended the school he and I avoided one another as much as possible, and this continued thereafter, although a few years later I helped him out when he had been admitted to a psychiatric unit in London. He told me at school that he did not want any contact with him spoiling my time at the school, and this was the reason he never ventured into the art department. This was a shame. He did not make any friends when he was at the Academy, but he did maintain contact with some friends from [REDACTED]. We never really made up until the last two years of his life when he was suffering from a malign recurrence of the tumour. This led, very sadly, to his death in 201[REDACTED], and the school's apology comes too late for him.

Reporting of abuse at Edinburgh Academy

26. Most pupils in the senior school had been through the junior school where they had become accustomed to physical and sexual abuse from teachers and had normalised this culture. The school taught you the word 'clype' to designate the shameful status of anyone who called out abusive behaviour. You did not 'clype', and no-one wanted to be a 'clype'. You ignored any abuse. I can now see how bizarre and unhealthy this was, reflecting as it does the complete absence of pastoral care or any reliable authority.
27. In terms of bullying and sexual peer-on-peer abuse in the boarding houses, none of them were able to speak about the abuse that was received or witnessed, and neither was I. It was entirely contained as a shameful guilty secret and, for me, an indelible impression. [REDACTED] was a popular member of a gang in Mackenzie House at that time and I was too scared to report him as I knew he would come after me. This basic fear stayed with me in the aftermath of school and I am relieved, now, to find an authority that will listen to me and take responsibility for it. I am still shocked that neither [REDACTED], nor I, nor [REDACTED] felt able to report [REDACTED]'s abuse in the dormitory.
28. I know that [REDACTED] was later expelled from the school. Although I do not know the details of this I understand it may have been for excessive bullying. I do not believe he was ever held accountable for his abuse of [REDACTED].
29. As a senior pupil, however, the way [REDACTED] was abused by other students became unbearable for me. It would have been 198[REDACTED] or 198[REDACTED] when I complained personally [REDACTED] to Mr Ellis, the Rector. I remember his feeling of compassion and outrage, but also his powerlessness. He was a man of good intentions who made many improvements to the school but who seemed unable to address the culture of bullying. He asked me to tell him who was responsible and very reluctantly I named names, but I have no idea to this day if anything was followed up. I can't remember their names now.

30. Mum and Dad were also aware of it, but they did not know how to deal with it effectively. My Dad was always busy and was frustrated by [REDACTED]. Mum's answer was he got no O-Grades at [REDACTED], but he did manage to get them at Edinburgh Academy. He left the school without getting enough qualifications for university, however. He went on to complete an apprenticeship in photography and after many years, to get a PhD in physical chemistry, to marry and have a family.

Leaving Edinburgh Academy

31. I left Edinburgh Academy just before I turned 18 and I took a year out. I then went to Oxford where I read English at Mansfield College.

Life after boarding school

32. After I left Oxford I spent the next 35 years pursuing a vocation as an artist, making theatre, books, exhibitions and films, the 'speakeasy pictures' project. In 1993, as part of that, I took an MSc at Napier University in applied film-making.
33. I met the [REDACTED] artist [REDACTED] in 1994, and we have two children. Our daughter was born in Scotland, then I moved from Scotland to [REDACTED]'s home country, Slovenia. After six years we separated, and I then found myself as a single parent. I had counselling, and after three more years, in 2005, I moved back to Scotland with my children, taking them back to Slovenia every holiday. My fear that they might be abused if I was not there to supervise their childhood was a driving factor in this decision.
34. My kids went to [REDACTED] Primary, and then to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] High School. I was on the parent council of all three schools and, after my experience at the Academy, this uniquely Scottish innovation - to replace the school board with a voluntary group of parents who have overall responsibility for the school and the duty of interviewing and appointing the headteacher - was a revelation. We saved

██████████ Primary from closure, appointed ██████████ as Head of ██████████, and campaigned successfully against the closure of the City of Edinburgh Music School ██████████. In addition, we oversaw the day to day running of the schools dealing with pastoral care (such as the inclusion of disabled children), bullying, discipline and school development.

35. At a personal level this meant that I remained in close contact with teachers as my own kids navigated various disasters and triumphs, found their vocations, and headed out to further education. None of this kind of engagement was available when I was at the Academy where the School Governors played only a distant role in the school, concerned only with the finances, development and reputation of the school, and parents were disempowered and kept at arms length. That antiquated system remains in place today, and is in my opinion the root cause of the systemic failure of care for children at private schools.
36. I 'retired' from my artistic project in January 2023 after 35 years when I was appointed Arts editor of the Morning Star.

Impact

37. The school's attitude to homosexuality had a profound effect on me, and I attribute the 'internalised homophobia' that has plagued my life ever since to my experience at the Academy, and not to any experience in my life before then. This is consistent with what the media report describes as 'survival strategies' adopted by children that were widespread at the time and have a long-lasting psychological impact following the experience of attending such a school, even as a day pupil. It has not been until much later in life that I have faced this, and attempted to address the repression of my sexuality.
38. I have stayed in contact with ██████████, albeit at a distance, as he lives in the US. It remains difficult to speak about the impact of boarding on both of us and although I urged him to make a submission to the enquiry, I don't believe he has been able to do

so. I do believe, however, that he was traumatised by his experience and is owed an apology from the school.

Treatment/support

39. I have had two courses of counselling in my life: one of 'family therapy' in Slovenia when [REDACTED] left me in 2002, and one in Edinburgh in 2018 to deal with 'coming out' and associated problems with my family. Neither of these touched upon my school experience, however. The only avenues I have found to explore the traumatic experience of the Academy has been in creative writing and journalism. I wrote and published a short story about my boarding experience in 2020, and I also wrote a feature for the Morning Star in November 2023. I have forwarded copies to the Inquiry.

Reporting of Abuse

40. I have not reported any of the abuse to the police or to any other authority.

Records

41. I have not applied for any of my school records.

Lessons to be Learned

42. I believe that this type of school experience pulls families apart.
43. I think the problems derive from the system of oversight in such schools. Those with legal responsibility - the school governors - are only concerned with the school as a business and for its reputation. This distant role means that they absolve themselves from the duty of care that should be their responsibility. Such schools would be better overseen by parent councils, a tested and reliable structure in Scotland that has proved itself since its introduction in 2006.

44. I applaud the fact that the Academy is facing up to the atrocious history of abuse in its past and reaching out for statements such as this one. There is no substitute for knowing the history in an open, compassionate, and public way. In my generation we had no sex education, no gay role model, and no pastoral care except for survival strategies of our own devising. To reach out publicly is a necessary and appropriate thing to do, and I hope, an example to other schools such as [REDACTED], Fettes, Loretto, St George's, Merchiston, Gordonstoun et al. where the culture was, if anything, much worse. But the apology, and the claim to have reformed, is inadequate and unconvincing. Although necessary, it should be only a first step towards making structural changes in the governance of private schools.

Other information

45. When I read about historical child abuse at the school, it is generally about predatory pedophile teachers, and little is mentioned of peer-on-peer abuse by school kids, in parallel to the teachers. This was a culture that was endemic throughout the Edinburgh Academy and is related to, and the legacy of the behaviour of those abusive teachers. This is why I choose to make this statement now, and I hope it adds something significant to the findings of the Inquiry.
46. The Inquiry has given me the opportunity to talk about the bullying and abuse that occurred when I was at Edinburgh Academy. If the Inquiry did not exist I would not have this chance, and the survivors' group, which is helping some people to express what happened to them at the school, would not exist.
47. 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.....[REDACTED].....

Dated.....04 March 2024.....