

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

David HANSON

1. My name is David Eric Hanson. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1941. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I have a BSc (Hons) and Diploma in Education. In 1964 I taught science at William Penn County Secondary School in Slough, Buckinghamshire and was there for a year. I then moved to Aberlour House where I taught mathematics until 2001, and science until about 1975.

Employment with Aberlour House School, Aberlour

3. My role within Aberlour House varied through the years I was there. When I started there in 1965 I taught science and mathematics and did this for approximately ten years. From about 1975 until 1983 I taught mathematics only. In 1983 I continued to teach mathematics and was made Deputy Head. The school had 76 pupils in 1965 (counting pupils on the 1965 school photograph). The school roll increased steadily, helped by the re-introduction of girls in 1973, to a maximum of just over 140, I think in the early 1980s. The roll was 101 in 1998 (again counting pupils in the school photograph).
4. My interview to join Aberlour House was very informal, over a lunch. I think it was in Slough although it may have been in London. As far as I am aware my references were followed up. I later visited the school for a couple of days prior to being formally offered the job. I do not recall there being any formal probationary period. Prior to commencing there were no pre-requisites such as GTCS registration, but I did register fairly early in my career at the school.

5. The school, founded by Kurt Hahn, started in 1935 in Duffus House, close to Gordonstoun, and moved to Rothes Glen House in 1936 for a short stay. When it moved to Wester Elchies in 1937, the school had 18 boys and girls. In 1939 the school had 35 boys and girls. Aberlour House, on the other side of the Spey, was purchased in 1947 to accommodate increasing numbers. At first, the younger pupils remained at Wester Elchies, and the older pupils moved to Aberlour House. At this stage the whole school retained the name of Wester Elchies. In 1963, Wester Elchies succumbed to dry rot, and the pupils moved to Aberlour House. In 1964, when Toby Coghill became Headmaster, the name of the school was changed to Aberlour House, the Gordonstoun Preparatory School, and then shortened to just Aberlour House.
6. Although the school was essentially still 'The Gordonstoun Preparatory School', the school did prepare pupils for other senior schools. Gordonstoun and Aberlour House had shared governors, and members of the Gordonstoun music staff were regular visitors. The links between the two schools were always very strong and I personally always felt that, despite the 20 miles geographical separation, Aberlour House was a part of Gordonstoun. Gordonstoun International Summer School, Gordonstoun itself and the Gordonstoun Junior School (Aberlour House) are collectively known as 'The Gordonstoun Schools'.
7. With the exception of 1991 my line manager throughout my time at Aberlour House was the Headmaster. From 1965 until 1989 this was Toby (later Sir Toby) Coghill. In 1989 he retired and was succeeded for the next four terms by Brian Head. In 1991 I was Acting Headmaster, answerable to the Governors and supported by the Governors and Mark Pyper, Principal of Gordonstoun. In 1992 John Caithness became the Headmaster and was there until approximately 1999, when he was succeeded by Neil Gardner. Neil was in post until I retired in 2001. With each Head there was almost daily liaison and I believe that the Headmaster kept an eye on the performance of all staff.
8. On my first weekend, a group of three pupils organised a trek to take me to the top of the nearest mountain. I believe this was their own idea, and typical of the pupil initiative that played a large part in my getting to know the school in the early years.

9. Finding my feet in a very different education environment, I was guided by, and followed the examples of, the Second Master/English teacher and the Housemaster/Director of Music (later also Second Master). I took on the responsibility for athletics coaching and completed an IAPS (Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools, now, since 2007, Independent Association of Prep Schools) athletics coaching course. I attended (and in many cases contributed to and/or organised) numerous in-service mathematics courses and at least one science course, for IAPS, SATIPS (Society of Assistants Teaching in Preparatory Schools, now Support and Training in Prep, Primary and Secondary Schools) and Charterhouse School.

Policy

10. Other than in 1991, I did not have any specific involvement in, or responsibility for, policy in relation to the care, including residential care, of children.
11. This was very much a shared involvement and responsibility. We had regular evening staff meetings involving all staff and in many of these meetings every child's name was mentioned and all staff could contribute any relevant information. Discussions were mainly concerned with each individual's overall well-being, responsibilities within the school and contributions to the life of the school. I do not remember any written policies but things evolved slowly over time. We carried out risk assessments as a matter of course using common sense, and health and safety issues were addressed automatically without specific 'labels'.
12. I think that a more formal consideration of risk assessments and health and safety issues followed the retirement of Sir Toby Coghill and I think that this coincided, more or less, with the attention given to such issues in the media.

Training, recruitment and staff appraisal

13. Members of staff were 'trained', usually informally, in the use of new 'things' such as computers, ICT, a new obstacle course, driving a minibus with a canoe trailer. There was encouragement to attend refresher courses during the holidays.
14. Recruitment of staff was very much the responsibility of the Headmaster.
15. In relation to staff appraisal, I would say that members of staff were constantly appraised by the Headmaster in addition to occasional more formal appraisal sessions. I might add that I think that all members of staff were constantly appraised by the children. Young people are, in my experience, generally very perceptive and don't 'miss' much. They would be able to tell if a teacher was genuinely interested in the subject, interested in their progress and in them as individuals. The pupils', largely unspoken, responses provided valuable feedback as to how well you were performing, both in the classroom and in the wider school activities.

Child Protection

16. I do not remember child protection receiving special attention until about 1991, but in a small, generally very happy 'family atmosphere' community, people (young and old) looked out for each other. I remember a Childline poster displayed in the school's payphone telephone box, from the mid-1980s at, or shortly after, the foundation of Childline in 1986.

Discipline and Punishment of Children

17. Discipline was rarely an issue. The school operated a system of 'pluses and minuses' (although the names changed over the years) for good deeds and minor infringements; competitions between club and flight groupings were a major incentive; the rank (promotions) system encouraged pupils to discipline themselves in order to achieve recognition and be given greater responsibility. The in-house flight and dormitory competitions helped to motivate children to 'behave' and do well. This was a major

incentive for pupils to play a full, active and successful part in school life. Children were encouraged to do well in all spheres of activity.

Complaints Procedure

18. Any complaints would have gone straight to the Headmaster and he would have been responsible for any disciplinary process and record keeping.

Strategic planning

19. I would, like most long-established staff, have had relatively minor involvement, from time to time, in strategic planning. I do not remember the potential for abuse featuring.
20. Strategic planning was the responsibility of the Board of Governors who met regularly, in the school, with the Headmaster. Members of staff were informed, where appropriate, of any developments – such as the decision to re-start taking girls in 1972.

Other staff

21. Members of staff were managed by the Headmaster. In my time as Deputy Head, I was responsible for organising the timetable, duty rotas and so on but, apart from the year as Acting Head in 1991, I did not manage staff and, apart from that year, no-one would have reported directly to me.

Recruitment of staff

22. When the school expanded, and it became necessary to increase the number of staff, I had a say in whether the school should appoint a science teacher or a mathematics teacher. I was asked for my opinion at the appointment of a science teacher who would take over my role in that subject to allow me to devote my time to mathematics.
23. At the start of 1991, it was necessary to appoint new members of staff. I was supported by the Headmaster and Bursar of the Senior School in the appointment of staff.

24. I can remember little about any formal recruitment policy. I believe that the first step was usually an advert in TES (Times Education Supplement); CVs and handwritten letters of application; references; an interview at the school for short-listed candidates and, in later years, teaching a lesson, with discreet feedback from the class.
25. Except in 1991, I was not involved to any extent with references received from former employers, although I do remember being shown a few over the years. I have no recollection of what references were expected to cover other than competence and general character, and I do not know if referees were spoken to.

Training of staff

26. Other than in 1991, I was not involved, in any significant way, in training and/or personal development of staff. I can remember staff going on courses and there was general encouragement to take on new responsibilities and follow up new initiatives.

Supervision/staff appraisal/staff evaluation

27. During 1991 I was involved in supervision and appraisal of staff. I spoke at length to all staff, sometimes accompanied by the Principal of Gordonstoun.
28. Following a number of key staff changes in a short period of time, I thought it important for the school to have a 'settling down period' and I tried to bring all staff – long-established, recently appointed, and new – together, and move the school forwards, united in a common purpose.
29. Thanks to everyone's combined efforts, this was achieved more quickly than I had dared hope.
30. As far as I am aware, all members of staff were appraised from time to time by the Headmaster.

Living arrangements

31. From 1965 until 1970 I had a room on the upper floor of the main school building. This would have been approximately ten metres from the nearest pupil dormitory. From September 1970 for about a year I stayed at the East Lodge, the gate house at the end of the school drive. From 1971 onwards, I had my own properties, firstly near Craigellachie and later in Dufftown.
32. Other staff had rooms in the main school building, accommodation in the grounds, or in their own residences in the surrounding area. The staff rooms in the main school building were spaced out, some in the 'corners' of the building and some rooms on the ground floor. Most rooms were within 'earshot' of at least one dormitory. Although there were no specific instructions to keep an eye on things, in the event of a 'crisis' there would have been a member of staff close at hand.
33. The Housemaster and Matron were largely responsible for the pastoral care of the children.
34. Prior to about 1990, all staff would have had occasion to visit the children's residential areas as a part of the routine running of the school, to check on things such as bed-making, housework and lights-out. My recollection is that arrangements started to change at about that time, with matrons and housemaster gradually taking over more of the duties performed by the members of staff on duty, but I cannot be certain exactly when that was.

Culture within Aberlour House School

35. The school was like an extended family. It was a very happy environment for pupils, and staff, to develop. Governors, staff, parents and pupils treated each other with a friendly respect. Although it was not until 1991 that I formalised my understanding of what the school community was about into the ten Rs listed below, I believe that these qualities featured all the time.

36. The ten Rs include the traditional three Rs of reading, writing and arithmetic. Whilst these were given appropriate attention in the classroom, they were not considered to be the most important elements of the school's 'mission'. The other seven Rs were a constant feature of everyday life. These are:
37. Respect (for self, others and the environment).
38. Responsibility (for own actions and the well-being of others).
39. Reliability (being punctual, fulfilling a commitment).
40. Resourcefulness (being able to improvise, react effectively and quickly to a situation).
41. Resolve (determination to see a task through to the end, and to complete it to the best of the individual's ability, even if it proved to be more demanding than expected, both in the classroom and in the wider school community; "If at first you don't succeed, try and try again").
42. Restraint (basically self-control; for example, not 'lashing out'; not trying to take more than the permitted one sweet a day after lunch; not 'queue jumping', but patiently 'waiting your turn').
43. Remorse (genuine regret, for example after upsetting someone with thoughtless, unkind words, or for 'letting the side down').
44. Fagging did not exist or, if it did, I was not aware of it at any time.

Discipline and punishment

45. Discipline and punishment for minor infringements would have been the responsibility of whoever was in charge – class teachers, games coaches, duty staff. For major infringements, children would have been seen by the Headmaster.

46. The school had a well-established system of 'pluses and minuses' used by all members of staff. The names changed from time to time with 'failures and mentions' being in operation for a time. This system sufficed for almost all day to day routine matters.
47. For classroom activities pupils carried a 'unit chart', and various systems were used over the years. I remember a graded colour system. The chart had a grid of squares and, when units were 'given' by staff, squares were coloured red (outstanding effort), green, blue, brown or black (minimal/no effort). The units were 'totalled' every week, and new charts issued, during the Monday morning letter writing period supervised by the form teachers.
48. There was little need to discipline children. Generally a questioning raised eyebrow or a glare would have been sufficient to have the desired disciplinary effect. The emphasis was on rewards rather than punishments. I cannot remember any published policy. I believe that the Headmaster would have explained anything that a new member of staff needed to know. Each new pupil was allocated an appropriate pupil guide who would, until the new pupil was confident, provide an introduction to life in the school. Quite often, the new child and the guide became firm friends.
49. One punishment (rather a short 'cooling off' period) was for a pupil to stand in the front entrance hall, with a clear view of the clock, for a specified time.
50. The records for the pupils were kept in the secretary's office. I do not know if they included any records of punishments.
51. Senior pupils were given positions of responsibility for others in flight management. The flights (named after birds of prey) were the basic day-to-day organisation groupings of children. The flights contained children of all ages and each flight had a leader and a second in command. Children lined up in flights for assemblies and meal time (roll-call) line-ups, with the flight leaders checking presence and tidiness, and reporting any issues to the duty staff. The 'pluses and minuses' contributed to the flight competitions. The flight competitions took account of children's performance in many areas of school life, and the desire to contribute to the success of the flight was a major

incentive for children to behave well and play an active, positive role in all activities. The winning flight was treated to a video party or similar reward. The flight competitions contributed to the club competition. The three clubs ('houses') were named after the local peaks. The club competitions included the results of the flight competitions as well as inter-club sporting activities. Members of staff were linked to a club and took an interest in, supported and encouraged their flights and flight leaders.

52. For mealtimes, senior pupils were appointed as table leaders, although most tables also had a member of staff at lunchtime. Senior pupils were appointed as dormitory leaders, reporting any problems to the Housemaster or Matron. Within the dormitory management, points were awarded for clean and tidy dormitories. These points went towards the dormitory competitions. The Housemaster and Matrons were largely responsible for monitoring the dormitories but, particularly in the early years, duty staff would have kept an eye on all activities from the rising bell to lights-out.

Day to day running of the school

53. All staff members were involved in the day to day running of the school. There was a member of staff on duty every day (later, two members of staff) with a rota at weekends. In practice this meant being present before the rising bell, although the Housemaster was prepared in case of any difficulty. Duty staff supervised the morning run and rang all bells throughout the day (until an automatic bell ringer was installed). Again the Housemaster was on hand in case of difficulty. Staff on duty also supervised breakfast, and housework which took place in classrooms, dormitories and communal areas, inside and out. Then duty staff encouraged pupils to arrive promptly at morning assembly and checked with the flight leaders that all were present. Duty staff were responsible for supervising morning 'piece' break with juice and biscuits dispensed from a trolley outside, weather permitting, the lunch line-up (roll call) and lunch, although other staff were present at most tables.
54. Other duty staff responsibilities included reading to one of the rest groups (junior or senior) after lunch, with the story continued, read by different staff each day, until finished; encouraging pupils to change quickly and get out for afternoon games and, at the same time, probably preparing to take games; encouraging pupils to head

quickly to showers after games and then change back into uniform; supervising afternoon 'piece'; encouraging pupils to afternoon classes; supervising tea line-up and tea, which was a sort of high tea; encouraging pupils to get to evening prep ('homework') in classrooms and then supervising it, keeping an eye on all classrooms where children were working; keeping an eye on the pupils' free time evening activities (usually outside, if sufficiently light) until the staggered bed times; encouraging pupils to come inside and get ready for bed; checking all outside areas, classrooms and communal areas for safety and tidiness.

55. Even with so many spheres of activity, I think an incident would have come to light at or around the time it was occurring, but I cannot now be confident that this would be the case. I would have been confident until I saw Sir Toby Coghill's name mentioned. This came as a major shock and it still is. I worked for Sir Toby, and with him, for 24 years. At any time, except at assemblies, line-ups and mealtimes, activities were taking place in numerous settings. If there was an incident, then I am surprised that it could have gone undetected. A pupil would, I believe, have had the confidence to say something to a member of staff or a fellow pupil, such as a flight or dormitory leader, or a parent.

Concerns about the school

56. To my knowledge the school was never the subject of any concerns because of the way in which the children were treated. If there were to have been any concerns, the Headmaster would have had the responsibility for all reporting to parents.

Reporting of complaints/concerns

57. I do not remember any established complaints process or reporting process. I do not remember any serious complaints. I do remember an occasional relatively minor complaint by a pupil concerning what appeared to them to be unfairness by a member of staff or another pupil and I remember trying, without taking sides, to resolve things. Any serious complaints would have gone straight to the Headmaster and I imagine any serious complaints would have been recorded in the pupil files in the school office.

Trusted adult/confidante

58. There was a time when pupils chose, I think, to be in a particular member of staff's 'tutor group'. The groups were of mixed ages and met for informal chats from time to time. I think the idea was mainly for each pupil to have a member of staff to look out for them, but also to provide an opportunity for members of staff normally teaching the older children to get to know the younger children better.
59. In practice, children had opportunities to talk to anyone they wished. In some of the informal shared activities such as projects, which included musical instrument making and candle making, or expeditions (both short weekend and week-long expeditions), children would chat away happily about anything and everything.
60. At regular evening staff meetings, each child was discussed briefly and all staff had an opportunity to contribute concerns. I have no recollection of children raising significant concerns.

Abuse

61. I have no recollection of a definition of 'abuse' and I can't remember the word ever being mentioned. We carried out risk assessments automatically, without the specific label in the early years. Health and Safety were matters of common sense and built into the way of life at the school. Putting a child in a position of potential danger, or allowing children to put themselves in danger, would have been inexcusable.
62. The school was a very happy environment. This is a personal view, supported by the comments of, and memories recalled by, the countless former pupils from all decades who have been, and in many cases still are, in touch with me, especially since my retirement.
63. Making a child unhappy, or failing to make an effort to restore happiness, would have been very much against the nature of the school. There was a greater awareness of, and attention paid to, Health and Safety issues, risk assessments, and a separation of the staff into boarding/teaching from about 1995, I think. Boarding staff took over

many of the early morning and evening duties originally performed by all staff on their duty days.

Child protection arrangements

64. I cannot remember any formal guidance or instruction on the care of children, other than general discussions about Health and Safety and being aware of the needs of the individual.
65. I feel that if there were any significant concerns they would have gone straight to the Headmaster. If there was a minor issue between children, then the first member of staff to become aware would probably have made an attempt to resolve the problem, but if it was a serious issue it would have been reported to the Headmaster.
66. I don't remember any specific child protection arrangements. This was a small, family atmosphere community where children were regarded as young people rather than names on a list. Staff, parents and pupils generally knew each other well and there was a general atmosphere of friendship. Although I do not remember a formal child protection arrangement, I never thought to question the lack of it. I thought that the school community functioned well.

External monitoring

67. The school was subject to at least two full inspections during my time there. The Inspectors did spend considerable time speaking with children, usually, I think, in a small group. Governors of the school often spent some time talking informally to staff and to pupils. During the meetings with pupils, I think members of staff were rarely present. In 1991 I arranged for groups of senior pupils to meet several interesting, professional adults, including one of the Governors, for informal chats. After an introduction, I left the pupils and visitor to talk, until it was time to return and draw the meeting to a close. The idea was to broaden the pupils' experience and to allow the adults to gain a little insight into the working of the school.

68. HMI Inspectors spoke to me on each occasion, and Governors spoke to me on many occasions. On all occasions I found everyone to be supportive. The HMI inspections were very positive and encouraging.

Record-keeping

69. I cannot remember a school policy on record keeping. In practice, minutes were written, usually by the Deputy Head, during all staff meetings and I believe those minutes were eventually stored in the school office.
70. When compiling a list of all former pupils (I think in about 1987) I had access to early 'admissions' records but I would have had no reason to see other school records, so I have no knowledge of what special records there might have been - dealing with issues or not.
71. Records were kept of all 'promotions' of pupils in the rank system. I think the rank system was simplified during the late 1990s. Academic records were kept for all pupils and comprehensive reports to parents, covering all areas of school life, were written every term. If special records covering issues concerned with the treatment of children existed, I was not aware of them.
72. As I remember, the situation that existed in 1965 evolved little in the next twenty-five to thirty years.

Investigations into abuse – personal involvement

73. I was involved, at the direct request of the Governors, in dealing with an incident between children in 1990. Following a tip-off from a parent I was instructed to deal with an issue involving a girl and a boy. It was thought that the girl might have been about to engage in activities with a boy.

Reports of abuse and civil claims

74. I was not involved in the handling of reports to, or civil claims being made against, the school by former pupils, concerning historical abuse.

Police investigations/Criminal proceedings

75. I am aware of a previous police investigation. I think in about 1994 a girl made an accusation against a boy pupil.
76. I think the girl had joined the school later than most of her peer group and was not finding it easy to settle in. I remember the boy as being quiet and sensible. I believe that the girl told her mother that there had been an incident. The police were involved from the outset. I do not know what the outcome was.
77. A few years ago I was contacted by the police in a separate matter, concerning alleged historical abuse by a temporary 'junior' member of non-teaching staff. I was later contacted by the same police investigator concerning a more recent incident, involving Derek Jones, which had taken place towards the end of 1990. I can't recall the police officer's name.
78. I have not been asked to provide evidence at any trial.

Convicted abusers

79. I do not know if any person who worked at the school was ever convicted of anything.

Specific alleged abusers

Derek Jones

80. I do recall Derek Jones as a member of staff at the school. He joined the staff for the Autumn term of 1990. I think he was about fifty years old at the time. Derek taught English at the school and I remember him as a colleague.

81. My memory of Derek was as an 'abrasive' person. I found him to be a bit of a rebel and a 'stirrer'. In my opinion, he did not fit in well with the spirit of the school. With a number of recent key staff changes, and other changes that were about to take place, the school had temporarily lost some of its normal, smooth operation and focus.
82. At the end of 1990, when the Governors asked me to take over the running of the school for a year, I saw Derek Jones as being a major obstacle to the return of smooth operation and focus within the school. I was immensely relieved when he left before I took over.
83. When he was at the school I knew very little about him, other than that he seemed to be a good teacher of English. I saw him interact with the children and he seemed to be popular with them. I never saw him discipline or abuse any of the children.
84. Derek Jones left in December 1990, just before the end of term. I took over shortly afterwards, during the Christmas holidays, following the departure of the Headmaster, and I ran the school until John Caithness took over as Headmaster in the spring of 1992.
85. After he left the school, I heard of alleged abuse. At the time, I thought his departure was probably because of his general manner, and the incident referred to below but, during the holidays after his departure, I was informed by a parent, [REDACTED] that some form of alleged abuse had taken place. I was told that it had been dealt with to their satisfaction. I did not ask for more information. I do not know what he did or when it happened.
86. This relates to an incident involving John Findlay, whilst a pupil at Aberlour House. In the late Autumn of 1990, an incident was reported. My vague recollection is that it was reported by the school matron. It was reported that John Findlay had been given a prescription sleeping pill by Derek Jones, a teacher of English at the school. Jones was recruited in September 1990 by the Aberlour House Headmaster.

87. The matter was reported to the police and I remember teachers being questioned by two police officers in the school secretary's office. Derek Jones was fired almost immediately, so his total tenure was less than one term. The matter was dealt with, as far as I know, by the Chair of the Aberlour House Governors, and one of the Governors fired Derek Jones.
88. Before John moved up to Gordonstoun, I was invited to lunch at the [family name] home and spent some time with John. It was a very pleasant afternoon. John chatted happily whilst we searched for signs of a Victorian rubbish tip in the grounds of their house. The incident was not mentioned. Over lunch, or just after it, John's father, [redacted], told me that there was 'more to it' than just the sleeping pill incident, but he did not go into detail and I did not ask. I do not remember the word 'abuse' being mentioned in that very brief conversation, but the incident was clearly more serious than just the sleeping pill. [redacted] said that he had been assured that Derek Jones 'would not teach again' and that the matter had been dealt with to his satisfaction. I took it that the matter was 'closed'.
89. Probably around 2005, I met John socially through an invitation by mutual friends. John was on good form and he did not mention the incident when we chatted.
90. In 2014, John phoned me, 'out of the blue', to give me advance notice that I might be contacted by the police. At about the same time, I was contacted by [redacted] John's father, also concerning the incident. [redacted] sounded more than a little confused and seemed to have the impression that I was in charge of the school at the time of the incident. The incident had been dealt with, and Derek Jones had left, before I took over. Similar incorrect information also appeared in the press at this time.
91. I believe Derek had moved to Africa and some years ago he was killed in a car crash.

Sir Toby Coghill

92. I knew Sir Toby Coghill as the Headmaster while I was at the school. We were both there during the period from 1965 until 1989. I think he was about thirty-six when I started and he would have been sixty when he retired.

93. At the school he was my boss, line manager and source of inspiration and encouragement.
94. He was a trained architect and taught at Aiglon College in Switzerland before being appointed. He was a former pupil at the senior school and was inspired by the Gordonstoun tradition, established by Kurt Hahn.
95. Sir Toby was likeable and approachable, but the school was very much 'his' school and he kept a firm hand on the tiller. He transformed the school into one of the leading preparatory schools in Scotland. He was generally well-liked and respected.
96. We were from very different educational and social backgrounds and moved in different social circles. I would say that there was mutual respect for what we each did for the school but we did not become close friends.
97. Almost every day I saw him interact with children. He had a good rapport with the children and he knew each child in the school very well.
98. I saw him discipline children, individually and as a group. The need to discipline the children in the school was rare and a 'talking to' was usually sufficient. I did not see or hear of him abusing any children. **I was shocked to see his name being listed as an alleged abuser.**

KME

99. I knew ^{KME} as a member of staff at the school. We were at the school at the same time around 1968 until 1971, although the exact period I am unsure. ^{KME} was in his mid-thirties and taught .
100. I remember him as being thoughtful and generous. We had a common interest in birds of prey. In my case this was the scientific study of the pellets ejected by owls and in his case it was falconry.


101. He appeared to me to be a likeable 'social climber', with an uncanny knack of 'falling on his feet'. His 'name dropping' became a matter of some amusement among the staff. I learned quite a lot about his good fortunes from what he told us all, but I can't say that I knew him well. I trusted him enough to buy my first car from him when he upgraded from an aging Morris Minor to a racing green Aston Martin, I think. It was certainly a dream sports car and it was much admired by all. He was most welcoming and kind to my wife following our marriage in 1970.
102. I saw him interact with the children. He had an easy, friendly relationship with young and old alike and he was popular. He was very capable as a [REDACTED] and I remember that some of the [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] produced by his project group were exceptional.
103. I did not see [REDACTED] discipline or abuse any of the children.
104. He left the school very suddenly, without any explanation. At the time it seemed he was perhaps 'getting too big for his boots', but his departure was a shock. It was only some time afterwards that it was hinted that his leaving resulted from an incident. This matter was dealt with by the Headmaster. I do not know what he did, but I think whatever it was happened in 1971.

Helping the Inquiry

105. As I saw it, the school was a very happy, caring place, with a homely rather than institutional atmosphere. It brought out the full potential in children by educating the whole person. In many ways, I think, Aberlour House and Gordonstoun were ahead of their time. Their activities inspired other schools to follow their example, particularly in the field of outdoor education.
106. I have been told several times, and by different people, that I am somewhat naïve. I do not look for issues, find faults, read between the lines or look for hidden agendas. I am not naturally suspicious or questioning.

107. Pupils during my time included seven children of Gordonstoun Headmasters from the late 1960s onwards; at least twelve children of other Gordonstoun staff; at least eleven children of Governors of the school and at least eight children of Aberlour House staff.
108. I imagine that all of those adults, particularly the Governors, would have quizzed their children from time to time and I think it would have been difficult for abuse to have gone unnoticed at, or about, the time it happened. Regarding information that the Inquiry has concerning possible abuse, I have no idea what was being mentioned. I cannot remember any member of staff (let alone three) leaving after allegations, and I do not understand what is meant by 'exam expedition'. The school operated many types of expedition, but I cannot remember any that might have been referred to as 'an exam expedition'.
109. Having more clearly defined roles, including the separation of the staff into teaching staff and boarding staff, which I believe was introduced because of the evolving worldwide awareness of Health and Safety, accountability and litigation issues rather than a response to concerns about the operation of the school, was probably a good idea.
110. Unfortunately, I believe, this contributed to the school's loss of something that I find difficult to put into words. In the early years, if something needed doing, you did it. This covered all manner of things from driving a hockey team to a tournament in Perth to unblocking a lavatory or diverting floodwater. There was no 'that's not my job' or 'I'll leave it to someone else' mentality. Working at the school was a full-time commitment. Only a very few appointed staff found this commitment too much and left. This was not a nine to five, five days a week job. You were expected to be fully committed, resourceful and adaptable. In the 1960s and 1970s it would not have been unusual to see the Headmaster mowing the games field, teaching staff helping to wash dishes or all staff helping to erect the heavy goal posts ready for the start of the rugby season.
111. I can see now that clear, regularly updated, school policy documents on many issues would have been a good idea, to ensure that all staff were 'singing from the same hymn sheet', although I do not believe that the school suffered from the lack of them.

112. Despite the very full programme of daily activities, staff and pupils had considerable freedom to use their initiative and embark on adventures. It is sad that many of those adventures could now be considered inappropriate or too risky.
113. Up to about 1980, roads were much quieter and safer. In the later decades of the 20th century, safety considerations and emphases seemed to develop very quickly. These factors would probably rule out some activities as being too risky today. Such activities might include unaccompanied (or accompanied) cycling expeditions, or keeping snakes and 'crocodiles' in the classroom.
114. The happy, family atmosphere that I found when I joined the school in 1965 changed little, if at all, as the school doubled in numbers. It was the family atmosphere, and the shared adventures and experiences, that countless former pupils, and in many cases their parents, remember with great affection.
115. Lessons that could be learned I think might be: school policy documents on many issues being regularly updated; clearly defined teaching and boarding roles, although I believe that most boarding schools would find it difficult, if not impossible, to work on that basis (particularly small schools where staff usually each have a number of roles); finding opportunities to obtain discreet feedback from children, parents, school Governors and the Headmaster; having a designated father or mother figure within the school to whom children could turn in the first instance if they had any concerns, or felt they had been treated unfairly, and perhaps someone in authority looking for issues, even if there appear to be none.
116. 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..... 9 January 2021

