

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

STATEMENT OF **RC-A645**

I, **RC-A645** of **DPA**
will say:

1. I was born on the **DPA**
2. I was born in **DPA**, Kent, but my family moved to London fairly soon thereafter.
3. My father was a businessman working in the computer industry. My mother was a housewife. I have one sister who is **DPA** older than me.
4. Both of my parents were devout Catholics. My father was from an Irish Catholic background and was educated at Downside School. My mother was a Catholic convert, but as is the way with many converts she was especially devout.
5. I believe that I started in St Benedict's in September 1972. At this time I would have been 6 nearly 7. I remained at St Benedict's until after my O Levels but I did not remain there for the sixth form. I thus passed through the junior school, then did the standard two year stint in the middle school (age 11 to 13), before passing to the upper school.
6. After leaving St Benedict's my family went to live in **DPA** for **DPA** years. I did my A Levels there but unsuccessfully and when I returned to the UK at the age of 18 I initially planned to retake my A Levels. I abandoned that plan and obtained some computing qualifications. I then got a job in the **DPA** industry and I have worked in **DPA** ever since.
7. My first impression of St Benedict's on arrival there at age 6 were reasonably positive. For the first two years we had mainly female teachers and they were reasonably nice. The school on the whole was very strict, but initially the teachers were pleasant. However it would be fair to say that as I moved into my third and fourth year at the junior school, there developed an atmosphere of violence which became more severe as time went on.
8. Corporal punishment was in regular use including in the junior school. In the middle and senior school boys were generally silently escorted to the office of a senior teacher for corporal punishment to be administered. In the junior school by contrast corporal punishment was generally administered in the classroom, in front of other children. Generally the teacher would call the errant child up to the front of the classroom and corporal punishment would be administered using a bat – for example a table tennis bat.

9. I feel quite strongly that the atmosphere of extreme violence, menace and severe corporal punishment was part of what allowed sexual abuse to take place on such a wide scale. When most of the pupils are perpetually in a state of fear and often terror (and I choose my words carefully and I believe accurately here) then teachers can get away with just about anything. It is notable that some of those teachers who were convicted of sex offenses at school were also amongst the most violent members of staff.
10. At junior school it was normal for pupils to be dragged out to the front of the class and be beaten by a wooden bat by a teacher.
11. At the age of 11 I moved up to the middle school. I had two headmasters there: Father RC-F47 and Laurence Soper.
12. I would say that on transition to the middle school the violence became worse. There was more physical violence between the pupils but also more violence by staff members.
13. It was in the middle school that I encountered David Pearce, Laurence Soper and John Maestri.
14. Pearce actually was not particularly violent, but he was quietly menacing. He was known throughout the school as "gay Dave". This was how he was referred to by literally all the children, he was known universally by this moniker. He seemed to actually revel in this description.
15. His general technique was to be constantly moving his hand over some part of your body; the shoulder, the leg, the thigh. It was generally quite subtle; he would touch you and his hands would linger on your flesh for just a little too long.
16. Beyond on this unwanted attention from "gay Dave", I did not experience any sexual abuse as such in the middle school.
17. In the upper school I experienced what I have always regarded without question is a sexual assault from Pearce. In the next few paragraphs I describe this incident which I recall with great clarity and accuracy. I should add however that I think there may have been other incidences. I simply cannot recall them with any detail or accuracy and, aware as I am of the deficiencies of memory over a long period I do not seek to allege any other abuse by Pearce although it is possible some occurred.
18. The context of the incident was the Combined Cadet Force (CCF). The CCF met on Friday afternoons. We would dress up as soldiers, march around – that sort of thing. In addition the CCF had trips away, e.g. to army bases or camping, maybe twice a year.
19. David Pearce was heavily involved in the CCF. Effectively he was the deputy leader. He styled himself "Captain Pearce". He certainly liked strutting around in his uniform. At one point he also held the role Quarter Master.
20. The head of the CCF was Mr Baker, a chemistry teacher, who styled himself "Major Baker".

21. The CCF hut was situated at the back of the main playground, about parallel to the junior school building, close to the Abbey itself. There were three or four compartments (rooms) within the prefab building. One was the armoury, one was the Quarter Master's store. When I look back I can see why Pearce was so happy being Quarter Master – this person is responsible for fitting out all of the cadets with their uniforms.
22. On one occasion when I was trying on some camouflage trousers, Pearce took the opportunity to shove his hand down the front of them, inside the waistband and inside my underpants.
23. He grabbed and groped my genitals.
24. Whilst doing so he made some remark along the lines of "lots of room in there!".
25. I cannot be entirely sure how long this incident lasted for. It seemed forever at the time. It was probably no more than about 30 seconds.
26. It was difficult to do anything at the time other than laugh it off. I felt frozen in the headlights.
27. I tried to avoid David Pearce after that.
28. Looking on how this felt at the time, as boys we did not find abuse of this kind particularly shocking. It was simply something that happened and we tried to deal with it.
29. As stated above, overall I would say that the atmosphere at St Benedict's was quite violent. Aside from that the teaching was fairly mixed. There were one or two inspiring teachers, most teachers were fairly mediocre. Ironically both John Maestri and David Pearce were amongst the best teachers and they were both good at it.
30. For many years I just got on with my life and I did not think about the incident with David Pearce and nor about the wider culture of violence at St Benedict's. The some years ago I came across Jonathan West's blog.
31. I got in touch with him. The blog and my discussions with him reawakened my memories of what had happened at St Benedict's.

Statement of Truth

I RC-A645 believe that the contents of this statement are true.

DPA

Signed: _____

Dated: 2 November 2018

Ref: **DPA**