

## **Bullying**

I guess almost all of us do it: whenever something that is widespread but wrong is brought into conversation, there is a universal tendency to say something like "Yes, but it goes on all the time", as if somehow that makes it acceptable. It applies to speeding on the motorway - yes many people get up to 90 m.p.h. as a matter of course (including in the past myself, for which I have been roundly fined on more than one occasion), so we tend to think it is more OK than had it been if only a very small few did it. Regarding the recent teacher-pupil abuse scandals, I have heard several people say, as if somehow it lessens the vileness of those who use their pastoral but powerful positions to indulge their weakness, that "it goes on all the time; what can you do?" [What you can do is get rid of the scourge and make the position available to people who do not abuse pupils, on pain of being fired and dealt with by the law.]

Whenever school bullying is brought up, the response is often something similar - "I'm sure it happens all the time; it is endemic in public schools". No, it isn't. It is endemic in public schools or any other establishment where the school authorities do not deal with it. The fact that it goes on a lot does not make it OK, and neither does it make it less destructive for those who are bullied. I was one of those, I am now sixty, and I still bear scars from the time. I was able to work through it at the time, and came out the other end reasonably intact, but I know there are many who don't, and the fact that I still feel it to the degree I do is surely testimony to that it is not remotely acceptable.

To return to my tendency to compare the reality of Chetham's with the fantasy of Jennings' school - Linbury Court had no bullies, and the pupils were adventurous middle class boys - constantly playing harmless pranks on each other but underneath very firm friends - with, no doubt, great futures as leaders of men.

Almost immediately I arrived at Chetham's, it was apparent that there was a thug element, both in the same year as myself, and within the ranks of the sixth form prefects. We can assume that every year had its equivalent, but, by and large, I was personally only affected by those at the younger and older ends of the senior school. That there is a bullying element in virtually every establishment where there is a collection of people working together - not just at school age, but in the workplace, in politics, in nightclubs, even within families - is patently obvious; it is, after all, a primitive instinct that needs to be tamed by those in charge. The difference is made and the moral example set when the authorities tolerate it or otherwise - or encourage it.

For at least the first three years of my time at Chetham's there were bullies at every stage who made the lives of the bullied - i.e. people like me - a complete misery. In addition, certain upper-sixth form prefects were given leave to discipline the younger boys by means of unsupervised corporal punishment using a gym shoe - a responsibility inevitably abused by some.

### **Contemporary bullies**

Many of the younger bullies were full-time residents. Others had previously been at Chetham's Junior School, and so were already well ensconced with their mates when they moved up into Main School.

The bullies' victims tended to fall into one, two, or all of three categories: day boys, boys who had entered the school at the age of eleven, and scholarship boys.

I was one of two in my year who fell into all three categories: I was not resident, given that the family home was five miles away in Chorlton-cum-Hardy, a suburb of South Manchester, and anyway the half-scholarship that I won did not include residency.

Having been state-educated at the primary level - excellently, I might add - I did not attend Chetham's Junior School, as many of my contemporaries in Main School had.

I was one of only two in my year on any kind of scholarship - which makes me wonder if the parents' attitude was significant, particularly as my father was very prominent in the parents' association and had a torch-bearing nature, always being at the front of the queue of volunteers to help with such events as the Christmas Fair etc.

I also believe that my being very much a loner invited a certain amount of trouble.

But I believe that far more significantly I was the musician who was paraded in public by the school more than anyone else.

The main reason was, however, that the bullying thug element went largely unaddressed by anyone in authority during that period.

In all these groups there were many exceptions - indeed, in my experience, the worst bully of them all in my years at the school, or at least the one with whom I clashed the most, was not resident - but the pattern definitely existed.

The bullying often consisted of physical abuse by a group with a ring-leader against an individual, as it tends to amongst boys of similar age. The commonest form was contemptuous and provocative pushing or kicking - something I experienced during my first week, and which I had never encountered before. It was physically harmless, and was probably entirely typical amongst boys of that age; the reason it became very intimidating and distressing was that it was almost continuous - in my case, to the point of my not wanting to go to school at all.

Sometimes things got a lot worse, usually as a result of the victim's feeble attempts at retaliation. The seizing of his property (a school bag was a favourite) and then passing or throwing of it from one to another to prevent the victim retrieving it is a fairly typical prank amongst schoolboys, and is again to some extent harmless. But it is not harmless when the property is damaged or destroyed, which also happened on occasion. And again it is psychologically harmful if the victims are regularly the same ones. I am obviously writing autobiographically to some degree, but I was not the only victim.

Sometimes the sneering and intimidating by the group would turn very nasty if the victim's attempts at retaliation were more determined, and could end in a one-on-one fight with the ringleader, looked on by the others. This usually took place downstairs in the cloakroom area underneath the form rooms in the then new block, where the staff and sixth-form prefects only patrolled occasionally.

Telling a member of staff - 'splitting' - made everything a lot worse afterwards. It wasn't worth splitting, in any case, as it was rare that anything much was done about it.

All of these things happened to me several times during the first two years or so of my time at Chetham's. I am now embarrassed to think of the degree to which it intimidated me, but it was very real at the time.

That I was hardly blessed with good looks was a secondary consideration, but it did lead to my nickname amongst the less pleasant of my year of 'Frankenstein' - affectionate diminutive: 'Frankie'.

As there was a major mental hospital in the North Manchester suburb of Prestwich, there was an ongoing referral to 'Prestwich' as the place anyone who was thick or - in my case, weird - ought to be sent.

Later, a friend came up with a kinder nickname, that also kept the thugs happy, of 'Bronco'. [No, it was not a reference to the then available brand of toilet paper that had the water-absorbency of an armoured car - at least I don't think so.] This was quite clever, as there had recently been a popular TV Western series of that name at the time, about cowboy-hero Bronco Layne, of which the theme tune was a song that went:

Bronco,  
Bronco,  
Tearin' across the Texas Plain,  
Bronco,  
Bronco,  
Bronco Layne.

[ [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXvuX8xiu\\_E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXvuX8xiu_E) ]

My lovely contemporaries used to sing the following delightful variant whenever I passed by a group of them:

Frankie,  
Frankie,  
Tearin' across the Prestwich Plain,  
Frankie,  
Frankie,  
He's insane.\*

No problem with that, as it is the sort of thing so many kids have to deal with; it was the fact that it went on for two years that bothered me.

It is actually quite funny in retrospect - albeit in a kind of Frankie (!) Boyle sort of way - but at the age of 11 and 12, I found it horrible, particularly as there were often groups of them singing it together followed by the inevitable shoving and sneering. However, to refer to me as Bronco did lighten the load quite considerably.

Once memories of the original reason for the nickname of Bronco had died away around three years later, when in any case the bullying had been stopped dead in its tracks - mainly because of the change to a specialist mixed gender music school - I became Peterkins - God knows why, but it was definitely better than Frankenstein.

The hard core of my year had a vocabulary that they applied to the others, as follows (subject to variation):

Duhness (sic?) - someone who was unable to answer a question correctly in class, and was therefore stupid and thick, and ought to be sent to Prestwich. It presumably stems from the expostulation 'Duh'. Given that 'Prestwich' was a reference to a mental hospital, academic slowness and mental illness had obviously been traditionally confused. Often there was reference to men in white coats taking the relevant duhness away in a yellow van - this was because the Prestwich Mental Health Hospital was known to use yellow vehicles, although I do not know if it was true.

Licker - someone who was able to answer a question correctly, when the bullies were unable to, or was seen having a friendly conversation with a member of staff.

Split - someone who told on the bullies. This inevitably led to further bullying, particularly as so little was usually done by the school authorities, other than to let it be known that the tale had been told, that it was generally better for the victim to keep quiet.

Wimp or fairy - someone who cried when punished, or victimised.

This sort of crap was handed out in class - sometimes quite openly in front of certain teachers, certain of whom did nothing at all to quell it. Thus the thugs who handed it out became conditioned to think that such behaviour was acceptable, and that those certain teachers were 'OK'. In adulthood, many of them would have become company directors, or in some other position of authority. God help those who work for them.

\* 'Insane' was another word that was bandied about freely, regarding anyone who did not fit the norm. It is probably one of the reasons that the use of the word in marketing campaigns grates on me so much now - 'This weekend only, we are giving insane discounts', 'Our low prices are insane', etc etc. 'Crass and inappropriate' doesn't even begin to describe it.

Another term used widely was 'rape'. A victim of bullying was sometimes 'got', again usually in the downstairs cloakroom, by several other boys at once, and 'raped'. This took the form of the victim's arms and legs being held by at least four of them, whilst another would inflict varying degrees of torture on his genitals. Sometimes this was done without inflicting pain, which has implications of its own, whilst on other occasions it was undoubtedly intended to be as unpleasant and painful as possible. Whatever motivated this, the use of the word 'rape', and thus the diminution of its true meaning, is disturbing and has many implications.

One hideously nasty piece of work was one year older than I. Very near to the time when I was due to perform Tchaikovsky 1 with the school orchestra, he singled me out in a practise room, and somehow managed to force me into leaving my hands on the piano keyboard whilst he sat on the lid, leaving my fingers severely bruised. He has since been on the music staff at one of Britain's extremely major public schools for boys (he was an extremely talented singer and organist). When I gave a concert at said school fairly recently, there seemed to be no lasting problem, but his obsequiousness was on an Olympian level, and I resisted the urge to revisit our altercation of thirty years before upon him.

The other boys who were into music were rarely bullies; the problem was always with a small minority of those who were not musicians, and who increasingly felt sidelined as those particular years progressed. One was made Form Captain at one stage, and he used his tin-pot position of authority to widen the scope of his bullying. On one occasion he

was put in charge of the form, as the teacher was absent for some reason, and took the opportunity to force me and two others to write some work-related thing on the blackboard as he stood there kicking us, with many of the others laughing along.

I should stress that it was a small minority who ruined it for the rest (or at least for me). I should also stress that I realise that this happens to some degree at all stages, at all schools and in all walks of life, and is a normal part of growing up. When it does damage is when it is always the same few who are bullied, when the bullies are promoted into such positions as Form Captain or Prefects - or, God help us, Head Boy - and in particular when there is no effective way of getting the authorities to deal with it. And, of course, that applies even more to the much more serious cases of abuse that we now know went on later. That it goes on in multiple situations doesn't make it any less damaging.

There is a fine line between the two possible reasons for school authorities doing nothing. On the one hand, they might be refusing to indulge what they consider whinging - a sign of weakness - on the part of those who break the unwritten code of not 'splitting' on those who make their lives miserable. On the other hand, they could be allowing a certain amount of enjoyment and even sadism on the part of the superficially stronger ones. Although one is marginally more understandable than the other, both are contemptible.

It is not even parallel with the idiotic tradition of 'hazing' in certain parts of the army. If hazing is part of the culture, everyone has to go through it, so it is at least not victimisation - that would only come later if you proved to be a wimp during the hazing. As I read recently on the Internet, hazing is about inclusivity, and bullying is about exclusivity.

In my case, encouraged by my father - who flatly refused to complain to the school on my behalf, partly because he thought I needed to learn to look after myself, but also that if a parent was brought in by a victim of bullying it was likely to make it worse - I responded one day in my third year during a particularly idiotic exchange about classical music being complete rubbish (not the exact two-word phrase that was used). This resulted in the usual sneering, baiting and general thuggery that certain of my year indulged in. My attempt at retaliation resulted in my being beaten up by one of the ringleaders, with an audience of other boys mostly encouraging my opponent. He was very much a sporty type (as opposed to me), and I ended up at Queen Elizabeth Hospital where I was treated with nine stitches in my lower lip where my teeth had gone through it. I have the lumpy scar in my lip to this day, so I assume it will always be there.

My father's desperate hope that I would grow a pair and stand up for myself was fulfilled one week later when I went for the particular individual concerned, and inflicted as much damage upon him as I could manage. Nearly three year's worth of rage came out in me, and I was never bullied again - a lesson I wish I had learned earlier, and saved myself what was in many ways a miserable school experience until well into my third year.

The result of that was very public too, but no one in authority so much as remonstrated with me. Thus, we were liable to being 'slipped' [see below] for all manner of misdemeanours, but seemingly not for bullying or fighting - unless a staff member witnessed it directly, which they obviously never did. The bullies should simply have been kicked out after transgressing more than once. If news of the bullying had only reached staff ears by rumour, it should have been investigated and dealt with openly. [Rather like rumours of sexual abuse by teachers, which abounded during the late 1970s and through to the present day, should have been investigated, not denied, covered up, and subject to a damage limitation exercise or what amounts to a public relations campaign.]

I often wonder if the experience had a long-lasting effect - either positive or negative - on my adult personality, in both personal and professional scenarios. The bullied often become the bullies, in the same way as the abused often become the abusers, and although there is absolutely no excuse for allowing oneself the luxury of that justification, one does have to be vigilant and self-critical.

I also wonder if it tends to work the other way round - that children who were bullies are more easily pushed around as adults? Or do they tend to be the same pathetic jerks as adults that they were as adolescents? I would be very interested to meet someone who used to be a serial bully as a schoolboy, to see how they turned out in adulthood. However, I realise that to get someone to admit to having been a bully is like trying to get a guest at a dinner party to admit to having voted for the BNP.

That I ultimately had to take it into my own hands begs the question: how did it come about that the school allowed it to happen? A very good question, and one that has contemporary implications and parallels with many other situations, ranging from sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace, to child abuse - sexual and otherwise - by teachers, priests, parents, neighbours and relatives. There is a very obvious comparison between the historical sexual abuse of students and pupils that is presently in the news, and the sadistic bullying described above. None of us realised there was a sexual element to it at the time, including the bullies, but I am sure there was one - there was gratification to be had from inflicting physical pain and emotional misery on others, particularly if you had either age or the safety of numbers on your side.

In Chetham's case, a belief seemed to emanate from the top - genuinely felt, I have no doubt - that it was character-building for the weaker and more diffident boys to have to stand up for themselves. The only alternative scenario is that the establishment didn't know it was going on, in which case they were not doing their job of pastoral care very well.

Many years after the episode above had occurred, in the middle of my first year at university, I met the boy who had prided himself on being my nemesis four years earlier at a kind of reunion New Year's Eve party at the home of one of my older friends. We got along quite well over a beer, and he told me that he had been encouraged by a staff member - the then games master - in his anti-wimp campaign, by which he meant the campaign of the 'real' men against the effete who were no good at sports and indulged themselves in useless arts subjects. As I had ended up in hospital, it was inevitable that news of our fight would have reached all of the staff and the headmaster; it was the then games master who was requisitioned to deal with it. A paraphrase of what the games master was supposed to have said to the relevant bully when disciplining him: "If you are going to beat one of the arty-farties up, for God's sake do it where there's no one else to witness it."

It seemed that once the two of us had grown up a lot, particularly now that we had both left school and gone our separate ways (I was by then studying music at university and he was working in a sports shop in Salford), there was no problem between us; in fact I think he was trying to apologise. I have only the word of the ex-bully on the attitude of the staff member, but, from what I can remember of this particular one, I can easily believe it. As a sportsman he was very impressive. As a games master he was divisive, as he was contemptuous of those who were not so good at sports and needed encouragement. And as an example to the kids he was atrocious.

## Sixth form bullies

As for the officially approved discipline handed out by the sixth form, it is a pity that such a situation was, and always would be, so easily abused. In principle, there is nothing wrong with correctly applied punishment for the sort of things we got up to. That no punishment is allowed in any practical way any more has to have contributed to the huge increase in violence and other evils amongst school kids. And there is nothing wrong with giving some responsibility for discipline to the sixth form, as long as it is supervised and moderated, and not allowed to get out of hand. But one of the main reasons that corporal punishment was eventually banned by law was the way it was abused sadistically, as it seemed to be increasingly by certain of the Chetham's sixth form during the 1960s.

One could be singled out for a 'slippering' by a prefect for anything from being late for school, to talking in class when the sixth former was deputising for a staff member, to swearing. The main issue being that, from what I remember, the sixth-former did not have to get permission to do it from the staff.

The usual scenario was that the boy in question was required to go to the sixth form study block, bend over the communal table, palms flat against the wooden top (usually with eyes closed and teeth gritted), and the prefect concerned would give him up to six on the buttocks with the gym shoe. In practice, the hard core of the sixth form would often gather en masse to enjoy the spectacle. The prefect would apply the gym shoe with as much force as he could muster, sometimes resorting to taking a run at the target, and eliciting as much pain from the victim as possible, with the other sixth formers laughing and applauding. I learned later from one of my contemporaries that some of them aimed for slightly lower so that the gym shoe could 'accidentally' catch the upper thighs as well as the buttocks, in order to increase the pain without being accused of doing it deliberately. If the boy cried, he was tormented further for being a wimp. And no member of staff was ever present - not at least when this scenario happened to me. It also has to be said that there were several sixth formers who very obviously disapproved of this, and showed it at the time, but they were shouted down.

Thus far I have refrained from quoting others in this post, but here I will make an exception. The ex-Chet's boy concerned is a few years older than I, and a fellow viola-player. When I was beginning to find my feet as a third year or so at Chetham's, he, as a sixth-former was very sympathetic to my ambition to become a professional musician, and talked with me a lot about music. I always did have empathy with people who were older than I, so it was quite natural for us to have these conversations. Having lost touch with him for almost forty-five years, I recently came across him by chance as a member of my audience, and inevitably we reminisced. He has been an M.D. for all of his professional life, but always retained his love for music, which was undoubtedly created by his time at Chetham's.

His take on being a resident was as follows: "In my first year as a resident, I did not have a room in the study block, sleeping in the "big dorm", and was subject to the same regime as applied to the younger boys. I once calculated that there were nine thresholds to be confronted and negotiated each day before breakfast, if a slippering from one of the sixth-formers was to be avoided; not getting straight out of bed when the call was given; not making one's bed to the required standard; not doing one's "trade" to a sufficiently high standard (e.g., not brushing rigorously enough between the cracks in the cobble stones

under the gatehouse); being late for or skiving music practice; having stains on one's blazer, having insufficient 'spit-and-polish shine' on one's shoes; turning up as little as 5 seconds late for the line-up before breakfast, as announced by the school bell; talking in line; and talking in breakfast before grace was sung. For a newcomer, even aged 16, negotiating these ordeals was quite daunting! For the seven year old, who had just joined the school, the same rules applied. They sometimes experienced inconsolable levels of distress and abandonment as a result, in the process of being toughened up!"

Thus, it seems that not being resident saved me from a far more rigorous regime - it is no wonder that the residents resented the day boys, and showed it through bullying them in turn.

The sixth formers were not by any means all bullies - some were, of course, extremely good hearted, and would never dream of indulging in any such thing - but it only, as always, takes one. There was a lot more than one, and it became a progressively crueller culture throughout my first three or so years at the school.

Those who perpetrated it may well have matured into decent people. However, their bullying nature, presumably a reflection of their families and to some extent encouraged by the school's turning a blind eye, will have certainly impacted on their adult lives in some way. I would certainly not be surprised if many of them had turned out to be failures as adults, as a result of the same weakness that made them into bullies as children.

If any of them are reading this - and you know who you are - I wish you all the best in your later years, along with those members of staff who turned a blind eye to your pathetic character - to say nothing of immaturity. But if I was one of you, I would feel extremely guilty, and very resentful of those who allowed me to get away with indulging in my weakness.

I feel I must mention one individual without naming him. He had a track record of bullying, and stories abounded, including one about him tying up one younger boy at the school camp in North Wales, and applying nettles to his naked torso, looked on with enforced amusement by several others - this was supposedly a punishment for some misdemeanour like having got up late, or some such thing. I don't know if this was true, or just hearsay, but it fits what I remember of his character. This person was later made Head Boy - he was academically very bright and successfully applied to go on to Cambridge. But however brilliant he was academically, and however good he was for the school's image, Head Boy is a socially responsible position, and bullies should not even be considered. If his bullying had remained unknown to the staff I would like to know just exactly where their heads were. And if it was known to them, why was he ever allowed near such a position of authority? Once he had achieved this position, he used it to humiliate many younger boys, handing out diverse punishments for the most trivial reasons, and regularly inflicting pain unnecessarily. What were they thinking? I can only hope that it was not in any way connected to family pressure through financial support, and am sure it was more to do with his positive achievements that he was made Head Boy than anything else.

### **Swimming lessons**

And get this one: boys younger than years one and two - and as far as I know this also included boys in the junior school - were not allowed to wear trunks in the swimming baths. I have reason to believe that Chetham's was not the only public school in the UK to insist

on this, although I do not know for sure. In any case, that something is in place in multiple institutions doesn't make it any less offensive.

But - please - why? Just to be clear: it was not that swimming trunks were not required - it was not a choice - swimming trunks were prohibited until the third year.

Boys under the age of thirteen in their dozens being required to take swimming lessons naked seems to me to be inviting something extremely inappropriate, even if it is limited to looking, and there is no positive reason that I can possibly think of for instituting it. [The reason one family was given at the time, when questioning the wisdom of this, was that the fluff from the fabric clogged up the filtration system. No swimming trunks I have ever seen produce fluff. Perhaps there was a time generations earlier when trunks were made from wool - the sort that came down to your knees, absorbed litres of water and weighed you down as a result, and flapped around your upper thighs, making you look like a Greek folk dancer when you were standing in the water. But by the time I was at Chetham's these were definitely a thing of the past. The fluff excuse was obviously pure nonsense (I nearly wrote 'flannel'...), and almost funny in its absurdity. Don't swimming trunks worn by thirteen-year-olds and upwards produce fluff then? I cannot possibly say with any certainty what the real reason was, but surely it wasn't that.]

I - along with plenty of others, I have no doubt - found it embarrassing and demeaning, although I was too young to think it through. I blame that, as well as the bullying during those swimming periods when the games master failed to supervise (which was often) - plus, I admit, my lack of motivation since - for my present day inability to swim properly, having felt unable to learn at school without humiliation. My solution to the embarrassment was to bob up and down in the corner, along with the others who felt the same, and not to get involved any more than I could help - a situation that was increasingly tolerated by the supervising staff members. This eventually led to my being able to skive off swimming week after week because most of the games staff prior to the appointment of the great Steve Pullen - a truly intuitive games and sports master who was absolutely inclusive and just the opposite of some of his predecessors - were seemingly only interested in those who were good at combative games and sports. I would venture that, had Steve Pullen been appointed four years earlier, I, along with everyone like me, would have turned out much better at sports, far more confident as teenagers, and with none of the unshakeable negative memories of the subject we now have.

### **Buttock inspection**

It behooves me to tell of a vivid memory I have of my second year, when I was twelve. A parent had complained to the school of the bullying of his son - an unidentified contemporary of mine - by the sixth form. The bullying had taken the usual form of unnecessary force whilst applying corporal punishment, and possibly the justification for corporal punishment in the first place. The investigation into the complaint was expanded to checking if anyone else had been bullied in this way.

So on one occasion during the weekly swimming period, we second years were required to stand all around the edge of the swimming bath facing the water, whilst the games master went around approximately thirty young boys' arses, examining them for red marks and other signs of bruising. In retrospect, I have often wondered if this was actually a cover for the games master - not for the obvious reason, as at that time we had a games master who was a very decent and responsible teacher (not the same one who later not so tacitly lent his approval to my being beaten up), who doubled as a teacher of English -

looking out for any other, more extreme, signs of abuse. I never knew which boy it was whose father had complained; to my knowledge he was never identified to the rest of us, which would, of course have been for the reason of protecting him against further victimisation for 'splitting'.

### **A Mixed Result**

One indirect good result of the loosening of the rules towards the end of my school career was that the bullying culture largely died out. Circa 1968, the school authorities finally ruled against the sixth form administering physical punishment. One year later, when the school became mixed gender - and perhaps contrary to the bullies' expectations - the girls were unimpressed with any demonstration of the aftermath of the previous era, and showed complete contempt for it. Of course, some girls also tend towards bullying in their different way, but it seems to me that, like boys, they are more likely to bully in single-sex schools - perhaps the best reason of all for mixing the genders.

The school changed for ever in 1969 to Chetham's School of Music, which was completely different in so many ways to the Chetham's that had previously existed for so long; perhaps that it became a mixed school for the first time was an even more significant change than was its becoming officially specialist in music. The arrival of girls changed everything about the culture, amongst staff and pupils - as was inevitable - and in most ways, for the better. In any case, by then, the younger ones would have simply refused to be humiliated and tormented as they had been before.

Thus, I never had the opportunity to 'slipper' anyone. Actually, I was never made a prefect for whatever reason, so I wouldn't even have been able to indulge myself had I been older. But the world, and the school, had changed hugely by the time I entered the sixth form; such abysmal, chimpanzee-like behaviour in which the bullies at all stages of the school had previously indulged was no more an issue - not at least to my knowledge. The tables had turned totally.

As I implied earlier, some physical discipline applied fairly by approved members of staff, witnessed and explained properly - as is still legal in certain parts of the USA - would surely have been a good thing. The abuse of it was what led to its being banned altogether in the EU, with, at best, mixed results. As always, it is the abusive minority who ruin everything for the majority.

And yes, that was intended to be topical, as was the earlier reference to the school authorities seeming to turn a blind eye; the presence of girls and the outlawing of corporal punishment administered by the sixth-form may have stopped the sort of bullying that I experienced, but it did nothing to later prevent teachers bullying girl pupils into sex in the sort of one on one situations that are endemic to the world of music teaching - letting the school, their pupils and the whole of the rest of the teaching world down by indulging their pathetic and weak power games.