

Who are they trying to protect?



DUNBLANE INQUIRY WAS A COVER-UP AND PEERS BULLIED ME TO KEEP QUIET SAYS LORD BURTON, EX-MASONS LEADER

PEER PRESSURE: Lord Burton says it's 'sinister'



MYSTERY: Campaigners want a new inquiry into why Hamilton, left, shot 16 pupils at Dunblane Primary, above. Critics say Lord Cullen, right, left crucial questions unanswered

THE inquiry into the Dunblane massacre was a massive cover-up, a top Scots Freemason has sensationally claimed.

Former Grand Master Lord Burton says that Lord Cullen's official probe suppressed crucial information to protect high-profile legal figures. He says they may belong to a secretive "super-Mason" group called The Speculative Society.

Some had links to Dunblane's Queen Victoria School - where gunman Thomas Hamilton was allowed to roam free before the 1996 atrocity. And Lord Burton revealed that he was bullied and threatened by other peers when he tried to raise his concerns in the House of Lords.

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NEWS OF THE WORLD INVESTIGATES

BY MARCELLO MEGA

World last month that police are investigating claims that pupils at QVS were regularly taken away and sexually abused.

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Murder

Former housemaster Glenn Harrison told us how he even found Hamilton, 43, creeping around the dormitories at night.

He said Hamilton, who murdered 16 pupils and a teacher at Dunblane Primary School in 1996, had close links to a top cop. Glenn said he was aghast that he was never called to give evidence at the Cullen Inquiry.

He said: "I was one of the people who was making a fuss about Hamilton long before he killed those children, but no one

wanted to listen." Now Lord Burton has contacted him at his new home in the Shetland Islands, saying he believes Glenn wasn't called to give evidence to avoid the embarrassment of top legal names being dragged into it.

The QVS school is for children of the military services and has long-standing links to high office - its current patron is the Duke of Edinburgh.

Whoever holds the position of Secretary of State for Scotland becomes president and Scotland's second-most senior judge, the Lord Justice Clerk, becomes a commissioner.

Lord Burton said: "I was Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Scotland at the time and I'm aware that most of the conspiracy theories around Dunblane revolve around allegations of a Masonic conspiracy.

"I do have some difficulty with that, but I have learned of an apparent connection between

prominent members of the legal establishment involved in the inquiry, and the secretive Speculative Society.

"The society was formed at Edinburgh University through Masonic connections so I accept that there might be a link by that route. But Hamilton was never a Mason. His grandfather was."

Current members of The Speculative Society include Lord Cullen and a number of other

judges, sheriffs and advocates. Lord Burton has been trying for years to get to the bottom of the conspiracy theories, using his influence in the House of Lords until the reforms meant he was no longer entitled to sit in Westminster.

Last night he said: "I tried repeatedly to raise concerns about the inquiry during my time in the Lords, and I was bullied and threatened by powerful peers loyal to the Conservative Government of the day, who

warned me of dire consequences if I continued to embarrass them."

But the determined peer pressed on and in 1998, asked a question in the Lords which revealed that documents from the inquiry had been ordered to be locked up for 100 years.

Among them was a police report revealing that Hamilton had been accused of sexually abusing boys and had been considered by some officers unfit to hold a firearms licence.

Secrecy

Lord Burton added: "We still need to know why that was necessary. Who was the secrecy protecting?"

Although the official reason is to protect the families of possible abuse victims, it's unusual for documents to be locked up unless for matters of national security.

In July, Dunblane ambulance worker Sandra Uttley told the News of the World how she and friend Doreen Hagger had drawn up a 50-point, 5,000-word dossier calling for secrecy surrounding the tragedy to be lifted.

They claimed that dozens of questions have gone unanswered and crucial lines of enquiry were ignored.

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said: "There may be other individuals who should face prosecution."

Glenn Harrison had kept dozens of files from pupils alleging bullying and abuse while he was at the QVS and wrote to parents warning of the dangers in 1991.

It led to him being ousted from the school and just days before he left, police raided his home and confiscated the files.

When Glenn read Sandra's story, he went back to police - and this time they agreed to investigate.

Last night he said he in turn had been glad to receive the call from Lord Burton.

He added: "I've been making noises for years and I sometimes despair and think it's time to just accept we'll never get to the truth. "But I think we owe it to all the people who were so affected by the killings to continue to demand answers to the many questions that were never asked."

Glenn told us that Hamilton had been a friend of Ben Philip, the senior housemaster at the QVS.

Mr Philip died in December 1993, aged 46, when he fell from a ladder while hanging decorations.

Glenn said: "They were friends so

Hamilton was a regular visitor to the school and I was introduced to him.

"Ben Philip was a decent guy who was very trusting.

"I think he thought he and Hamilton shared interests in things like the outdoors, and he couldn't see that Hamilton had another motive for wanting to be around the school.

"Hamilton ran camps in the school grounds, and he used the shooting range freely.

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"He came and went as he pleased, almost as if he owned the place, and no one has ever tried to explain why he had such freedom.

"I am still haunted by the memory of picking up my newspaper on March 14 1996 and reading about what had occurred at Dunblane Primary School the day before.

"I just knew the killer had to be Thomas Hamilton. He should have been stopped."

Demands have already been made to the Scottish Executive to investigate the influence of The Speculative Society.

It was formed in 1764 as an offshoot of the Masons and has counted Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Ste-

venson and Hugh MacDiarmid among its most celebrated members.

The Spec, as it is known, is described by its members as a debating club. They meet in candlelit vaults below Edinburgh University's Old College in the winter.

Prospective members are normally approached while they study at the university.

Its membership - which was secret until a year ago - reads like a Who's Who of the rich and powerful in Scotland.

Campaigners were determined to reveal the membership amid concerns, many expressed by senior lawyers who are not members, of the disproportionate influence the Spec is said to wield.

One legal figure who has long been suspicious of the Spec said: "Members laugh off the suspicions and say it's just a debating club.

"But, given that the members are picked as undergrads and almost without exception go on to reach the pinnacle of their careers, you have to think either that those making the selection are very astute at spotting potential, or that membership gives you a leg up in life.

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Marcello Mega

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Photo of Thomas Hamilton and Lord Cullen. Caption: MYSTERY: Campaigners want a new inquiry into why Hamilton, left, shot 16 pupils at Dunblane Primary, above. Critics say Lord Cullen, right, left crucial questions unanswered.

Photo of Queen Victoria School Gates. Caption: VISITS: Hamilton roamed free at Queen Victoria School at night.