

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

[REDACTED] QFM

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is [REDACTED] QFM and my date of birth is [REDACTED]. I am more commonly known as [REDACTED] QFM. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I didn't know my mother [REDACTED] until she picked me up when I was fifteen. My father died at work when I was two. He was called [REDACTED]. I had an older sister called [REDACTED] who has since died, and a sister [REDACTED] who is 77. [REDACTED]

3. I was seven and a half when I went into Quarriers and was there for eight years. I don't remember much of my time before I went into Quarriers. We stayed in Govan, Glasgow. It was us [REDACTED] children and two younger ones called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. My mother had taken in a boyfriend called [REDACTED]. He used to beat us up and lock us in our room.

Quarriers, Bridge of Weir

4. From a letter I have from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (RSPCC) it says we were put into Quarriers because of cruelty to us at home though, as far as I'm concerned, their dates don't tally. It's as if they are blaming my father, but he was dead by then. [REDACTED] I

think we were placed there on a voluntary basis because my mother couldn't cope with us.

5. We went to Overbridge near Bellahouston Park which was a receiving centre for Quarriers. My mum had said I was going on a fortnight's holiday. [REDACTED] at Overbridge for two or three hours. My mum left and I was in tears. [REDACTED] then taken to Quarriers, but I don't remember how [REDACTED] got there. When [REDACTED] arrived myself [REDACTED] taken to cottage 40 which was called Strombar House.

6. I don't remember much about that first day except that it was confusing, and the cottage was run by a couple called [REDACTED] who came from Dunkeld. They were the cottage mother and father. There were fifteen boys in the cottage. The older ones looked after the younger boys.

7. Quarriers was run by The Church of Scotland. [REDACTED] was the [REDACTED] and Dr Minto and Dr Davison

Routine at Quarriers

8. We would get up at 7:00am and scrub concrete floors and do housework. We went to school from 8:30am till 4:00 pm and then do more work, like getting coal from the cellar. I would have to clean and empty the fireplace. Most of the work had been done in the morning.

9. The [REDACTED] made breakfast which was usually porridge and toast from what I remember. We all ate in the dining room together.

10. There was eight or nine boys in each of the two dormitories. The ages were mixed from 15 down to 4 or 5. We had a bath once a week supervised by Mrs [REDACTED] You would be in the bath on your own, though I can't remember whether the water would be clean or not.

11. You would go to church on a Wednesday night and on a Sunday morning. You would have a bible class on a Sunday afternoon and church again on Sunday night. We also went for a walk on a Sunday afternoon. There was no religious education in school. Dr Minto and Dr Davidson were the ministers who looked after our spiritual welfare. I have absolutely no complaints about either of those gentlemen.

12. I never helped in the cooking. The house parents supervised the eating but ate separate from us. The food was alright.

13. We didn't wear a school uniform and wore clothes that we got from the central store. I remember me and [REDACTED] always had to wear the same clothes.

School

14. School was alright. I remember one of the teachers was the sister of W.H. Malcolm who runs the haulage business. We were taught the usual things and it was like a normal school. You worked your way up through the years. We weren't taught any life skills but I would say that the education was average. Discipline was alright in the school and I don't recall ever getting the belt. I don't remember if we sat the Eleven Plus exam.

Leisure time

15. We got no pocket money or treats. I don't recall much in the way of leisure time, and it feels as if I lost my childhood. We got to listen to the radio in cottage 27 but not in cottage 40, and the chores in cottage 27 were lighter though we still had to clean the floors and fetch the coal.

16. I don't remember any books or comics or any toys. My sister brought [REDACTED] some toys but [REDACTED] didn't get to keep them.

17. We had gym in the school including football. We were in the Boys' Brigade which we went to once a week. We learned to tie knots and other things associated with the navy. This was done in Quarriers.

18. We went to the Kelvin Hall Circus once a year, and we went to Seamill one Sunday. When I was fifteen we went to Burntisland for a week with the Boys' Brigade. The only time I went to the pictures was one time when [REDACTED] QAJ took us to a cinema in Paisley. We weren't allowed to leave "the village" as Quarriers was known.

Medical treatment

19. There was a hospital on the left side as you went into Quarriers where babies went.

20. I had problems with boils on my neck and that's why I have spondylitis now. I now have spondylitis in my back and knees. I got a broken back because of the beatings. Nobody ever listened to you if you complained about the beatings so you didn't get treated.

21. The only regular medical check I recall was the regular TB jag once a year. We got dental care but I don't recall much about it.

Christmas and birthdays

22. We got a present off the Christmas tree which would be taken off us the next day in cottage 40. The presents were donated. When we moved to cottage 27 we got to keep the presents. There were two big trees in the church. You got asked what you wanted for Christmas sometime in September. I don't recall Christmas dinners. Birthdays weren't marked or celebrated.

Visitors / inspections

23. Visiting was on a Saturday once a month and lasted two to three hours. My sister [REDACTED] and her husband visited as well as my uncle [REDACTED]. Both my sisters used to visit me. They would bring sweets, but the [REDACTED] QAF/Q AG would take them off us and we would never see them.

24. The only time my mother showed up was when there was talk of [REDACTED] being sent to Australia or Canada. My mother stopped them doing this, but I don't know any of the details about that.

25. A couple from Johnstone used to visit and take me to their home. I don't remember much about it. I think it happened twice and I don't recall how old I was.

26. I don't remember any official visitors and I never spoke to any social workers.

Abuse at Quarriers

27. I wet the bed until I was about ten years old. Dr [REDACTED] QBL put a rubber sheet on the bed, and if I wet the bed it would give me a shock that took lumps of flesh out of my backside. [REDACTED] FBT wasn't a bed-wetter so didn't have a rubber mat. I know Dr [REDACTED] QBL was a registered doctor but I don't know if he was part of the staff. The sheet had loads of wires connected to it, and was plugged in.

28. My father was killed in 1947 and that was what started me wetting the bed. The cottage parents, the [REDACTED] QAF/QA were determined to stop me wetting the bed. They would beat me and make me stand in ice cold water with ice in it in the winter for maybe up to half an hour. It was Mrs [REDACTED] QAG who would beat me with a strap or with a stick simply because I had wet the bed. When Mrs [REDACTED] QAG hit you it was normally over your clothing but sometimes on the bare back. Mr [REDACTED] QAF never interfered.

29. I still have a mark on my wrist from those beatings. They would also make me stand naked all night on a cold concrete floor. I don't know what happened to others who wet the bed, but I was made to stand in the coal cellar instead of going to bed.

30. We had to make our own beds and I usually had to try and cover up the fact that I had wet the bed as Mrs QAG would go crazy if she found out. If she found out she would take the sheet off and it would be washed. I don't know who did that.

31. This went on for three or four years when the bed-wetting stopped. During those years I wet the bed every other night. Mr QAF was the one who would put me into the cold bath or stand me on the concrete floor, but it was Mrs QAG who beat me. I take it that it was one of those two who switched the rubber mat on at night.

32. After my injuries from the electric shocks healed up I ran away to Glasgow and went into the police office at Plantation in Govan. I ran away because of the beatings and the electric shocks. There were two other boys with me [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. The police took us all to [REDACTED] mother's house but she didn't want to know, so the police said we had to go back to Quarriers. I don't remember the name of the police who dealt with us. I told the police what had happened to us but nobody listened to us.

33. Another thing that the QAF/QAG used to do to me was that they would put my head down the toilet bowl and flush the toilet. They did this to me three or four times though I can't recall which of them did it to me. I can't recall exactly why they did this but it was just part of the general abuse by the QAF/QAG

34. When we got back to Quarriers the [REDACTED] for the home, QBK battered us. He was the [REDACTED] Quarriers. He gave me the belt, six on each hand. He had had to come to the police office at Plantation to collect us. After I got the belt I was returned to cottage 40 and had to stand facing the wall with no food though [REDACTED] passed me half of his. Shortly after this all the boys in cottage 40 were transferred to cottage 27 which was run by QAJ

35. In Cottage 27 I settled down and things were fine. All the boys from cottage 40 were questioned about the QAF/QAG though I can't remember who by, but it was only me and a few others who were willing to speak up about the terrible treatment they handed out to us. I don't know what happened to the QAF/QAG

36. [redacted] QAJ [redacted] was a Christian woman. If you did something wrong she would sit you down and explain why what you had done was wrong. She always tried to guide us and would never hit us.

37. Most of my time in Quarriers was spent feeling depressed and frightened when I was in cottage 40. I was always shaking, a nervous wreck. Life in cottage 27 was different because [redacted] QAJ [redacted] listened to you. If you had something to say she would listen and speak to you. She tried to turn right what was wrong and never turned you away. I started to feel relaxed there, but I wouldn't go as far as to say I was happy. There was always a fear that something would happen if you went wrong.

Pringle's Farm, [redacted]

38. When [redacted] fifteen and a half years old [redacted] sent to a farm in Castle Douglas by [redacted] QBK [redacted]. It was Pringle's Farm [redacted]. On the farm you would get up at 4:00am to milk the cows and [redacted] worked till midnight. After six months there, [redacted] QBK [redacted] came to check the books and found [redacted] hadn't been paid so [redacted] [redacted] taken back to Quarriers.

39. The work was hard and [redacted] didn't get paid, but the food was good. [redacted] got no visits from anybody during those six months. Nobody knew about the long hours we were working though we sometimes got time off at the weekend.

40. When [redacted] went back to Quarriers, [redacted] went back to cottage 27 with [redacted] QAJ [redacted] and were there for a few months.

Leaving Quarriers

41. After that my mother came to the home and took me away and we stayed in Govan. [redacted]

[redacted] My mother took [redacted] back only because [redacted] had reached an age where [redacted] could go

out and work. [REDACTED] QBK had actually arranged for me to go to Australia, but it was all cancelled at the last moment.

42. I went to work but moved to Paisley with my aunt and uncle. I joined the army aged seventeen and a half. I came out of the army in 1962. I got married and had kids, but I haven't seen my grandkids for fifteen years.

Impact

Health

43. Being in Quarriers had a big impact on me. On my health for starters. I tried to blank it out of my mind. I was told by my doctor that I was mentally scarred for life, but I refuse to accept that. I can't settle and need to be on the move, and I help out my old army mates.

44. I have osteoarthritis in my spine, legs and feet because of the beatings I got. I have arthritis as well and I've also got spondylitis in my neck.

45. I am retired now. I get an army pension for my legs and feet, and loss of hearing. My hearing started to go in the 1990s and it was blamed on my time in the army. I have tinnitus in both ears and I suffer from vertigo. I take painkillers for the pains in my back and legs. I would say that started about thirty or forty years ago.

46. Mentally I've had stress all my life. The pain causes a lot of the stress and you weren't allowed to think for yourself either in Quarriers or in the army. It took me a while to settle down when I came out of the army, but through the army I've had a lot of good advice and they always help me out. I've been involved with the army for years. I've got a lot to be thankful for from them.

Family and relationships

47. My time in Quarriers affected my marriage. I often ask myself what sort of person I would have been if I hadn't gone there. My wife left me a lot of debt, about £4,000, in 1984. She said I was never a husband or a father. I met a married woman, but I didn't want to start another relationship in case it also failed.

48. Quarriers has a lot to blame for it because all my life I was frightened and I wanted my kids' lives to be different. My wife wanted too much of me. Because of my time in Quarriers I had no understanding of the value of money.

49. I can't blame the school in Quarriers for holding me back other than I spent my time at school worrying about what would happen to me when I got back to the cottage.

50. I do get nightmares on rare occasions and I get the odd flashback about my time in Quarriers. I don't hate the QAF/QAG I just feel sorry for them.

51. I ended up in a homeless unit in 1984 and I would sit and ask myself "When, where, who, why?". I was homeless for about eighteen months. My ex-wife was a [REDACTED] and she was stealing from the clients. I was unemployed and the kids were five or six.

52. I blanked all of this out of my mind for many years but I heard about various house parents getting arrested for sexual abuse, so I wrote down all my experiences and gave it to a lawyer who put me in touch with the police. I told the police everything I've said in this statement. This was about ten years ago, but the lawyer lost all my notes.

Counselling

53. I didn't receive help or counselling until my GP sent me to see a psychologist. At the time I thought I was going mental after seeing the thing about Quarriers on the TV. Three sessions at £500 a session. It helped me overcome my fear of flying which allowed me to go to Israel which was one of my wishes in life and I've now been twice. That's the only treatment I've had.

Reporting of abuse at Quarriers

54. I told the police about what was happening to me at Quarriers when I ran away and I also told [REDACTED] QBK [REDACTED] They all knew what was going on but they kept it all hush-hush. I told my sister [REDACTED] though she could see by the way I was walking that I was injured. [REDACTED] QAJ [REDACTED] knew what was going on. I also told my mother but she didn't want to know.

55. I wrote it all down years ago, sometime in the 1990s, and gave it to a lawyer but he lost the notes. After that I went to the police in Govan who have been looking into it. I think they still are. The police were very helpful. I think it was DS Connolly who was dealing with it but I haven't heard from him for a few years.

56. I also got a letter from the RSPCC but it was contradictory because the dates don't match up. Too many people didn't listen to what we had to say.

57. I never went back to Quarriers to complain. There was no point.

Records

58. I've got records from Quarriers but I've recently moved house and the records are lost somewhere in the house.

Lessons to be learned

59. All parents need to be educated because children need to be protected. I think some parents buy their kids love instead of giving it to them. Some kids shouldn't be in such homes but are there because their upbringing was bad.

60. 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.

QFM

Signed



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Dated

14 JUNE 2017

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