

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

[REDACTED] BKW [REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is [REDACTED] BKW [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1943. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I have very few memories of my younger life. I have however managed to obtain some of my records down the years. These show that I was born in my Uncle [REDACTED]'s house in Gilmerton, which is a suburb of Edinburgh. Uncle [REDACTED] was an [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. He was married to my mother's sister. I later found out that my Uncle [REDACTED] apparently wanted to adopt me but my mother didn't want this so it never happened.
3. My mother met my father and fell in love with him. He was already married with seven children and promised her a lot. I found out down the years that I have an older sister called [REDACTED]. I never knew I had a sister until I was much older and had left care. I never met my father. I know now that he died in 1981.
4. Jobs were really hard to come by and my mother was offered a live-in job in the south of Scotland. It transpires that she was only allowed to have one child with her where she was living. This was when and why she decided to put me into care. I was just over a year old. My records show that this was on the [REDACTED] 1945. It was a Barnardo's home called Arbigland in Kirkbean but I have no memory of being in there.
5. My records also show that I was in Redholme in North Berwick then Ravelrig in Balerno and eventually onto Tyneholm House which is in Pencaitland. These were all Barnardo

homes in Scotland. I have no memory of the other places I was in until I went to Tyneholm. According to my records I moved there on [REDACTED] 1950.

## **Life in care - Scotland**

### **Tyneholme House, Pencaitland**

#### *General*

6. Tyneholme House was run by Barnardo's. I remember that it was like a big palace with red carpets on the stairs. There were about forty to fifty children there and it was all boys. The only ones that I remember were my friends [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] BLB
7. I think that there were two or three dormitories. These were all upstairs. There was also a big washroom with a lot of showers in it. This was where we would get washed and do our teeth.
8. The home was [REDACTED] called Mr [REDACTED] BEB. He stayed at the home with his wife. They didn't have any children of their own. Mr [REDACTED] BEB was a bully and I remember hearing his wife crying a lot in their room. There were other staff but I don't remember who they were.

#### *Mornings*

9. You got up in the mornings around 7:00 am. After making your bed you would wash and do your teeth. This was usually supervised by Mr [REDACTED] BEB. After this we would go for breakfast.

#### *Mealtimes*

10. Most of the meals were okay. However if you didn't eat your meals you would be caned. Mr [REDACTED] BEB knew that I hated onions. The onions were stewed and he would

put them in my mouth and force me to eat them. I would keep them in my mouth until he walked away. I would then spit them out of the window.

11. I used to sneak down to the pantry during the night and I would steal a loaf of bread to eat.

*Bedtime/bed wetting*

12. If you wet the bed you would usually get the cane. You had to strip and clean your own bed and the bed linen would then go to the laundry to be washed.

*Washing and bathing/Hygiene*

13. I seem to remember having a bath every morning. There were no issues with bathing or washing at the home.

*Schooling*

14. A bus would take us from the home to the school in Pencaitland. I think the bus belonged to the home. The school I went to was okay.
15. I remember one time when I got into trouble at school for going into the girls area. I was given the cane on the hand by the headmaster and the teacher at the school. I remember that I was caned again on the backside by Mr BEB when I got back to the home. That was eighteen times in total that I was caned that day.
16. As a further punishment I wasn't allowed to go to the circus with the rest of the boys. This was an outing that had been arranged by Barnardo's. That was really upsetting as everyone had been excited about going to the circus.

*Religious instruction*

17. Every Sunday we all had to attend the local Presbyterian church.

*Review of care/visits*

18. I never had any visits at the home from social workers or welfare officers.

*Discipline*

19. The punishment for doing something wrong was normally the cane. It was usually Mr [REDACTED] BEB who caned you although the other staff would occasionally do it as well. If Mr [REDACTED] BEB caned you it was on the backside. This would be mostly over your clothes but there were other times it was with your trousers down and on the bare skin.

**Abuse at Tyneholm***Nature and frequency of abuse*

20. My friend [REDACTED] told me once that Mr [REDACTED] BEB had tried to touch him inappropriately. [REDACTED] was a bit older than me. When he told me this it was a warning and I knew what to expect when it happened to me.
21. On one occasion I had to go and see Mr [REDACTED] BEB in his office after I did something wrong. When I went in he tried to touch me so I just kicked him. When I did this I was smacked on the backside with the cane. It seemed to be that it was after this incident that I was asked if I wanted to go to Australia. I said yes as it meant getting away from Mr [REDACTED] BEB.
22. There was another incident one day when we were out for a walk. I found a £10 note which I handed to Mr [REDACTED] BEB. He gave me the cane and told me that I must have stolen it.
23. I felt that Mr [REDACTED] BEB was a constant threat to me. It was exhausting having to always be on alert as a young child in order to avoid him.

24. Mr BEB was cruel and always found reasons to punish us. This was both mental and physical cruelty. It was in his power to be intimidating and threatening. Most of us at the home were subjected to this by Mr BEB. He seemed to enjoy meting out punishments.
25. I used to have nightmares and would wake up in a sweat. I would be running away from a fox. I was trying to catch a tram to escape it. The dream always ended before I reached the tram. I realise now that the fox in my nightmares was the [REDACTED], Mr BEB.
26. I have another memory from my childhood when I think I was very young. I was hiding in a large coke bucket and was in terrible fear. I remember that I was covered in soot or coke. I don't remember which home this was in. It's just an image that I have. It's like my dreams of trying to escape.

## Migration

### *Selection/information*

27. I think I was about nine years old when I was first asked if I wanted to go to Australia. It was Mr BEB who asked me. I can't remember exactly what he said. I don't know if I was told I would be going or asked about it. I think now that it was already ordained that I would be going. It was remarkable that in normal circumstances I was treated as a child yet I was asked an adult question about a country which I knew nothing about. The vision that Mr BEB made out to me about Australia was that I would be riding a horse to school and there would be kangaroo's in the street. I had no comprehension about how far away Australia was. I feel that I was being enticed to go.
28. I had to go to a doctor in order to undergo a medical before I left for Australia. I was also given immunisation jags against small pox and similar things. I think the final decision for me to go to Australia was made by Mr BEB. It seemed to me that I'd be out of sight out of mind.

*Leaving Scotland*

29. It was about six months after it was first spoken about that I left for Australia. I was told I would be going to Greenwood Home at Normanhurst in Australia.
30. I found out that my friend [REDACTED] couldn't go to Australia because he was black. At that time they had a white only policy. My other friend, [REDACTED] BLB, was told he couldn't go either because he wet the bed. I didn't understand this because I wet the bed as well. It made me think that something must have happened that meant I had to go to Australia.
31. I was given some clothes and a suitcase by the home. There were khaki shorts and shirts. I was put on the train at Edinburgh going to London and I remember that it was the Flying Scotsman. I was on the train by myself for the whole journey. I had been told to get off the train in London and someone would meet me there. I had no idea how they knew who I was.
32. When I left the train in London, no one was there so I sat for two hours on my own before someone came and picked me up. All they said was that they had been held up.
33. I was taken to Barkingside in London. This was a children's home. There were other kids there waiting to go to Australia. I stayed at Barkingside for two weeks. I remember we were taken out and shown the tourist attractions in London.

*Transportation to Australia*

34. The day we were leaving for Australia we went on a bus to Southampton. The ship we boarded was called the SS New Australia. There was a man and a woman, Mr Pheby and Miss Hensby, who were to be our chaperones for the journey. We called them auntie and uncle. They stayed with us for the whole journey. The ship left Southampton on the [REDACTED] 1953.

35. On the ship there was three of us in the one cabin. I think I shared with [REDACTED] and his brother. I had my tenth birthday on the ship I remember there was a party for me that the other child migrants were at.
36. It was a beautiful trip on the ship. The food was good and there were no issues. I remember stopping at Port Said in Egypt then Aden and Colombo in Sri Lanka. The only place I remember getting off was in Aden.
37. The first stop in Australia was Fremantle and we got off the ship there. After this we went on to Melbourne then Sydney. When we were at Melbourne we were allowed off and went on a visit to the zoo. The ship arrived in Sydney on [REDACTED] 1953.

#### *Arriving in Australia*

38. When we got off the ship in Sydney there was a bus waiting for us. The chaperones, Mr Pheby and Miss Hensby came on the bus with us to Normanhurst. It wasn't too far on the bus as I don't think that it took too long. There was 21 of us on the bus. I was the only Scot. This was fine though as I had made a lot of friends on the ship.
39. Arriving in Australia was not as I had expected. As a child I was genuinely disappointed because there were no kangaroos running about the streets as I had been promised.

#### **Life in care – Australia**

##### **Greenwood Orphanage, Normanhurst, Australia**

#### *General*

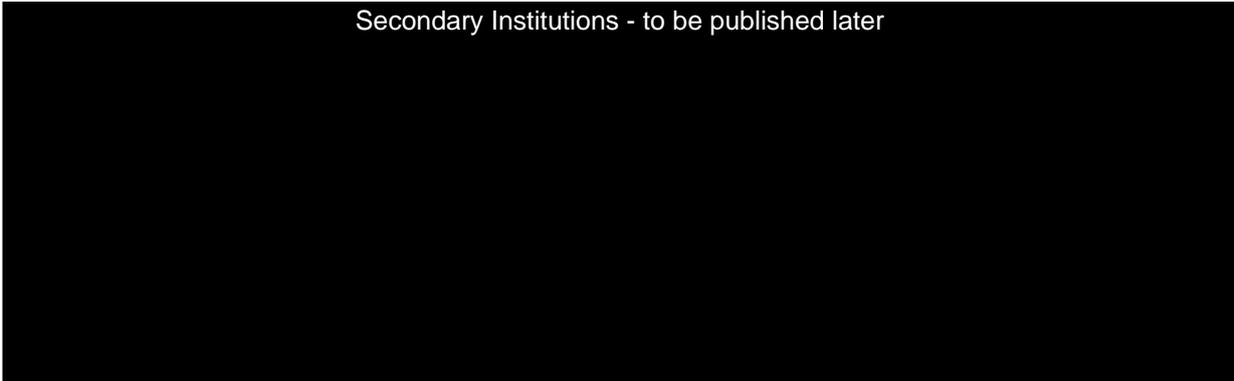
40. I didn't give it any thought about where I was going or if I would be going back to Scotland. If I was in a place I just thought of that as my home. It never entered my mind that I wasn't going to like the home in Australia. I knew that Greenwood was run by Barnardo's.

*First day at institution*

41. When we arrived at the home we were introduced to the staff. Tom Price was in charge. We called him Uncle Tom. The other staff I can remember were Auntie Boucher, Ken Booth and Mr BLD. The staff told us about the rules which were much the same as in Scotland.
42. The orphanage was made up of all child migrants. We all slept in big dormitories.

*Schooling*

43. I initially went to Normanhurst public school, which was good. When I finished at Normanhurst I thought I would be going to Hornsby Tech on the outskirts of Sydney. This was where the other boys from the home went. Instead I had to go with two other boys to Carlingford Rural school. To this day I don't know why they did that. Carlingford was a farming school so it might have been they wanted to train us as farmers, however it was never explained to me. Carlingford was further away from the home than Hornsby Tech. It was about twenty minutes on the bus and I was given money for the bus from the orphanage.

44.  Secondary Institutions - to be published later

*Healthcare*

45. I remember that the staff would take you to the local doctors to have your immunisation jags.

*Religious instruction*

46. We would go to church every Sunday. It was an Anglican church, Church of England. Everyone went to church irrespective of their religion. I think this changed later and you would be allowed to go to the church of your own religion.

*Personal Possessions*

47. I was given a shilling every week for pocket money. This meant I was able to go the movies.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

48.

49.

50. It was a bit sad leaving Normanhurst as I had a lot of friends there. They were my family at that time.

**Mowbray Park Farm School, Picton***General*

51. I went to Picton when I was eleven and stayed until I was sixteen. Picton was a large farm school. It was about ninety miles from Normanhurst. There were three big houses at Picton. I think that there was about sixty children, all boys at the orphanage.
52. Mr Green was the superintendent in charge. I also remember Miss Elseworthy who was one of the staff who worked at the home.

*Schooling*

53. I went to Picton High School. This was about five miles away. The home had its own bus which was used to take us to and from school.
54. I was happy at school but I didn't do well academically. I didn't want to do any of the work, which looking back now was a bit silly.

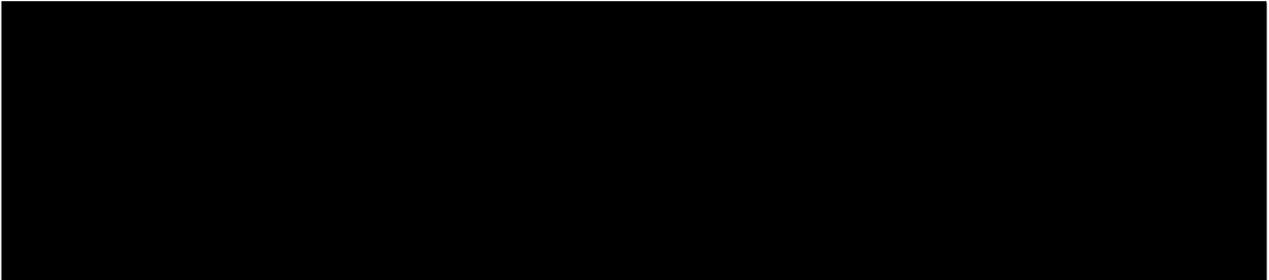
*Leisure time*

55. All the Barnardo's boys would go to the movies on a Saturday afternoon. If you had misbehaved you wouldn't be allowed to go. One of the punishments for misbehaving was that you had to milk the cows on the farm at four in the morning.

*Health care*

56. I didn't have any complaints about the medical care at the home. If you needed a doctor or a dentist then someone from the home would take you there.

57.



Secondary Institutions - to be published later

58.

59.

60.

61. There were other times when I would go and stay with families during the school holidays. One of the people I stayed with was a woman that I called Auntie [REDACTED]. She was a really nice person.

### **Life after being care**

62. I left Picton in 1959 when I was sixteen. This was after the home had been sold. I wasn't given any preparation for leaving or for how to live outside of a home.

63. Myself and two other boys from the home, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were put up in a room in Sydney. I started a job making metal ear tags for the cows and sheep. I didn't like it as it wasn't well paid. I still had to pay for my keep.

64. I think that I was ill equipped for the outside world. This led to me making foolish mistakes and getting into trouble with the law.
65. I had never asked questions about my parents when I was in care. I don't think any of the homes would have known anything about them. I was of the belief that I was an orphan with no parents. When I was eighteen I started to think about my family. I'm not sure why this was. It might have been because my friend [REDACTED] mother had moved to Australia.
66. I first met my wife, [REDACTED] when I was eighteen. After a while we then went our separate ways. I was married to another girl after she became pregnant. This didn't work out and we split up. Twelve and a half years later, in 1977, [REDACTED] managed to get back in touch with me and we got back together.
67. I have four daughters and a son. Two of my daughters and my son were with my first wife. My other two daughters I had with [REDACTED].
68. Years after I left care I met up with [REDACTED] BLB and [REDACTED], my friends from Tyneholm in Scotland. They were in Australia looking for me. [REDACTED] spoke about what Mr [REDACTED] BEB had done to us. [REDACTED] BLB denied that anything had happened to him. This was despite us knowing that it had. I know that [REDACTED] BLB has been in jail. I wonder now if that was because of what Mr [REDACTED] BEB did to him.

### **Records and family tracing**

69. When I started to try and find out about my family I went to the Barnardo's offices. At first I was told that I couldn't get my records. I think that was the law at the time. The law was then changed. I was then able to access my records. I found out about my Uncle [REDACTED] back in Edinburgh. He didn't know that I was in Australia. I managed to make contact with him and we started to correspond. He told me about my mother and sister and I somehow managed to get an address for my mother. I eventually wrote a letter to her. She replied to this by saying, "Don't write". That was very upsetting but I

was to find out years later that this was because my sister and her husband didn't know of my existence.

70. My mother, who I never met, died in 1968. As far as I know my father never knew about me.
71. In 1977 one of my wife [REDACTED] brothers was travelling to Edinburgh. I asked him if he could try and find out where my Uncle [REDACTED] lived.
72. [REDACTED] brother managed to get in touch with my uncle and he then provided an address for my sister. I sent my sister a letter and told her that I was her brother.
73. By a whole strange list of coincidences my sister later won a competition for a free trip to Australia by telling the story of me and her. The story ended up as headlines in a local newspaper. After this a journalist got in touch with [REDACTED]. They said that they wanted to use my story for an episode of the Channel 7 TV Show [REDACTED].
74. I knew nothing of this until the presenter came into the Milk Bar we ran at that time. I was shocked when he said to me what it was about. I was taken to a TV studio for the programme. This was the same day as I was due to be married. During the show I met my sister and Uncle [REDACTED] for the first time. I knew that my sister [REDACTED] was coming out for the wedding but I didn't know Uncle [REDACTED] was going to be there.
75. I later met my sister's children, two boys and a girl. [REDACTED] passed away in 2016. I am still upset that I never got to meet my mum. I have never met any of my father's children but maybe one day I will meet them.

**Other action taken***Nationality/passport*

76. I managed to obtain my birth certificate from Barnardo's. When I tried to apply for an Australian passport I was told that I couldn't as I wasn't Australian, I was still a British subject. Up until that point I had thought I was an Australian citizen.
77. Eventually I was naturalised and then I was able to apply for my passport. This happened very quickly as I had a trip arranged to go back to Scotland.

*Returning to Scotland*

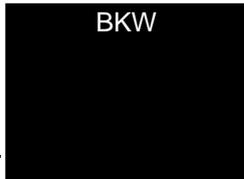
78. In 2005 I returned to Scotland. This trip was funded by the Australian Convention of Social Services.
79. When I arrived in Scotland I found out where my mother was buried. I went to this quiet cemetery and found her headstone. I kissed the plaque and said goodbye.

**Other matters relating to migration***Civil action*

80. I have never sought to carry out civil action against Barnardo's. Why would I, they had brought me up.

**Impact**

- 81. When I read my records from Barnardo's it was noted I was a troublesome and rebellious child. I would say that there was a lack of opportunity to express my thoughts. The sad part was there was no one there to back me up or stand by me. All of us children were considered 'pariahs' and 'outcasts'. This was in a society that judged the children through no fault of their own.
  
- 82. I think a lot about what could have been. There is an emptiness that I can't fill. The worst part is that I never got the chance to meet my mum.
  
- 83. 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.

BKW  


Signed.....

Dated..... 7/11/2018