

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

AA Y

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is AA Y. My date of birth is 1941 and I am presently seventy-six years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Bellshill Maternity Hospital and lived in a wee village called with my parents and two younger sisters, and . Our house was what was called a single-end, which consisted of just one small room that we all lived in. My father was a carpenter and a musician as well. and I remember him telling me he had played the Glasgow Empire.
3. I have no unhappy memories until my mother died in 1945 when I was four. was two at the time and was about eight months old. I vividly remember her collapsing and lying on the floor. It was very traumatic, she had lost control of her bowels. My dad was working at the time. My mother had had a stroke and was taken into hospital. She was bedridden there until she died three months later.
4. I remember starting school in I was only there for three days until I was taken away and put into Smyllum Park in Lanark because my father couldn't cope. He was still working at that time. Dad had four sisters, , , and . I subsequently learned that none of them wanted to look after me. My sisters did not go into care. I think they stayed with and

Smyllum Park, Lanark

5. Smyllum was run by the Sisters of Charity. There always seemed to be a lot of children there from nursery age up.
6. I only have very vague memories of Smyllum. I think I've been blocking out a lot. I do remember I hated it though. I was afraid quite a lot of the time and I didn't feel any warmth or closeness.

Routine at Smyllum Park, Lanark

First day

7. I had no idea that I was going to Smyllum. I don't remember anyone preparing me for it, I just remember being taken there. I was not even greeted when I arrived.
8. I was still very traumatised at the loss of my mother and I remember sitting in a waiting room when we arrived. I think my father was there, although I'm not sure. I felt a coldness, alone and hurt. When whoever it was that brought me left, I was given a whole lot of rules. Rules for this, rules for that and punishment if I broke them.
9. There was not an ounce of understanding of what I had gone through. There was no affection, not even a cuddle.

Mornings and bedtime

10. I slept in a large dormitory with other boys of a similar age. Sister AIU was in charge of my group. We were always in bed early.

Food

11. I can't remember much about the food at all. Breakfast was porridge and I recall mouldy bread. We would get these horrible peas and the meat we got had lots of fat and gristle in it. They called it stew, but it was horrible. We seemed to get cheese a lot, which I am very fond of.
12. After breakfast we would go to school. We would return to the refectory for lunch and then go back to school for the afternoon.

Washing and bathing

13. I have a vague recollection of cold baths. I don't think there were showers, although I could be wrong.

Clothing

14. I remember we had to wear khaki shorts and tops. I don't remember having a uniform for school as such.

School

15. The school was part of Smyllum and I quite liked it. I think the desks were on different levels and tiered. The teacher was a Sister Alexander. She used to praise me and I would get attention for doing well.

Holidays/trips

16. I don't recall any holidays, although I do remember going into Lanark one time for the local festival. There were no trips away to my recollection.

Birthdays and Christmas

17. Birthdays and Christmas were not celebrated at all. I do remember having a mutton mince pie for Christmas and some decorations were put up. We had made some of them, others were old baubles from somewhere. I don't remember getting any presents from anybody.

Visits/Inspections

18. I think my father visited me once while I was at Smyllum. I think it was around Christmas time. Lanark is a fair distance from [REDACTED] and getting there would have been difficult for him.
19. I don't recall any inspections being carried out.

Healthcare

20. I had dysentery while I was at Smyllum and was treated in the infirmary there. I can't recall a lot about it.
21. I also started getting headaches while I was there and developed nervous ticks. I felt my head was exploding. I don't remember the nuns dealing with this at all.

Religious instruction

22. Religion was your life. In some ways that was good, because there was singing and I have developed a great love of classical music and I think this stems from the ecclesiastical music I heard at that time. Everything was prayers. Classes were stopped for prayers. I loved the religion. To me it was a refuge.

Relations with other children

23. Any relationship between a boy and a girl was considered wrong. Friendships were discouraged. The only two people I can remember were a boy called [REDACTED] and a girl called [REDACTED]. That's very unusual over a period of three years.

Personal Possessions

24. I don't remember having any personal possessions.

Discipline

25. Smyllum was absolutely rule-bound. You were afraid to transgress anything. To some extent I can understand that. There has to be structure in children's lives. I think "How else was this handful of women to handle all these kids?"
26. Some of the other children had problems with bed-wetting and this was dealt with harshly. I did wet the bed myself sometimes, but not night after night. My vague recollection of how it was dealt with was that I was given a cold bath. The nuns would ridicule anyone who wet the bed.
27. I can remember evacuating my bowels on three occasions in the classroom. Looking back on this now I realise I must have been in a pretty bad state to have done this.
28. The one thing that I think is most important in a child's life is love and there was none of that. It did not exist.

Abuse at Smyllum Park, Lanark

29. The most significant form of abuse I experienced at Smyllum was emotional. There was a complete lack of understanding of the trauma I was undergoing after the death of my mother. Nobody took that into account at all. I was very hurt, not only about my mother, but also to have been taken away from my sisters and my father. There was no warmth. I was afraid and there was no understanding or compassion.
30. I can't remember the belt being used there, although it might have been.

31. I do remember being hit with a ladle on the hand in the Refectory. That was fairly common. The sister in charge of the Refectory told me to put my hand out and walloped it. I think that may have been Sister [REDACTED] AIU [REDACTED] although I can't be certain. That happened about three times. I don't remember what it was for, probably for not eating what I was given. What got me was that after you got hit by the ladle you had to say "Thank you Sister" for the punishment. I thought that was pretty sick.

Leaving Smyllum Park, Lanark

32. My father took me back home around [REDACTED] 1948. The impression I got was that he was back on his feet again. I can't recall there being any officials involved, although there probably was.

Reporting of abuse at Smyllum Park, Lanark

33. I did not report any of the abuse I underwent at Smyllum, there was no-one I felt I could have reported to. I had no means of communicating with my relatives.

Life after Smyllum Park, Lanark

34. I had to take a fair amount of responsibility when I got back home. My father's health had started going downhill and he was often really ill. He'd had pneumonia and pleurisy before and was a heavy smoker.
35. He wasn't working so our income was National Assistance and money from the St Vincent de Paul Society. [REDACTED] my aunt, contributed quite significantly too. She was working and used to help out a lot. Otherwise I think we would have been in very serious financial bother. I used to do a lot of the shopping and also ran errands for neighbours for some extra money.

36. My dad took his responsibilities to his children very seriously. We were fed and we were clothed and my memories of him are happy ones. I was worried because of his health though. I knew the consequences of my father dying were that I would be back in care. I dreaded that.
37. My father's health took a turn for the worse and he was admitted to hospital. [REDACTED] and I went to stay with our aunts [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. My sister [REDACTED] had had an accident when she was very young and she was taken into an institution when she was nine. She was brain damaged and she was in the institution by this time. My time with my aunts was not that great. My aunts didn't have a clue how to look after boys. Eventually [REDACTED] took [REDACTED] and I back to our house and stayed with us there.
38. Dad was in hospital for about three months and I used to go and see him every week. Just before he died I wanted to go and see him but [REDACTED] wouldn't let me. I was very stubborn and argued with her. This was quite late in the evening and she stood at the front door to stop me going. I grabbed a knife from a drawer under the sink and threatened [REDACTED] with it. She wouldn't get out of the way so I just swung it and it stuck in the door. She moved then and I left.
39. I ran to my aunt [REDACTED] house and she took me back home with one of her sons. When we got back, the local policeman was there and he told [REDACTED] I should be allowed to go. I went to hospital the next day and that was the last I saw my dad alive. He died the following Sunday.
40. I was told to go to Muirhead and see if my aunt [REDACTED], my mother's sister, would take me. I was told none of my dad's sisters would take me in. I hadn't seen [REDACTED] for years. I remember the day vividly, it was bucketing down with rain. I got on the bus, on my own, and went to the local police station because I had no idea where I was going. The policeman took me round to my aunt's and she took me in.
41. She organised it with welfare and got me moved school to St Mungo's Academy. It was a senior secondary school.

42. Her house was small and they just had one bedroom with two beds. I was there for six to nine months until her son [REDACTED] came back from National Service. When he did there was no room for me. Lanarkshire children's welfare officer got involved and I was taken to [REDACTED]. I think the only reason was that my aunt just didn't have enough room. This was in 1954.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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47. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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St Ninian's, Falkland

59. I remember going up the drive to St Ninian's and seeing this imposing building. It made me feel very apprehensive.
60. The school was boys only and was run by the Christian Brothers. There were always four brothers there, including the Brother Superior. When I arrived Brother LHC [REDACTED] Brother MIC [REDACTED] Brother MIC [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Brother LHC [REDACTED] carried out his duties with dignity, empathy and humour. Brother MIC [REDACTED] abused me the most while I was at St Ninian's. The other brothers that were there during my time were Brother MBR [REDACTED] Brother MBW [REDACTED] and Brother Fitton.

Routine at St Ninian's

First day

61. As soon as I arrived, I was told that there was compulsory football every night from four o'clock until six o'clock. After I had unpacked my suitcase, I went down and played for a short time. I was told at the end of it I would be playing on Saturday. After football there was an hour set aside for homework and then there was supper.
62. Supper was at seven o'clock and at the end of it I got jumped and I got a bit of a battering. I was told later that it had been the [REDACTED] brothers and the reason was because one of them had been put off the team because of me.

Mornings and bedtime

63. I was in one of the bigger dormitories with about half-a-dozen beds in it for the first couple of nights. I was woken up in the middle of the night by a smack in the face with a webbed belt from one of the other boys. Apparently I had been making noises in my sleep. After that I got moved to a smaller dormitory with another three lads. We were raised at quarter-to-seven. Mass was at half-past-seven and then we had breakfast. I had to get the bus to school in Cupar at eight o'clock with the other two

or three boys I shared with though. We were the only boys going to senior secondary and because of that I didn't have to go to Mass. Instead, after making my bed, we went for breakfast and walked down to the village to get the bus.

64. Night prayers were at nine o'clock. They were held in the chapel and were a full rosary, with a hymn at the end. After that, we had to go to the wash place to wash and toilet. After that was bedtime.

Food

65. The food in St Ninian's was awful and I hated it. Lunch consisted of watery mince and tatties, rubbish stew and the ubiquitous haricot beans. I hated them and they seemed to be there all the time. During school term, I would get lunch at school. I loved school dinners, which shows how bad the food at St Ninian's was.
66. At four o'clock, you got two slices of bread with jam and then another four slices with supper at seven o'clock. Often there was a plate of haricot beans too. With the bread you got a tiny piece of butter. It was nowhere near enough.

Recreation

67. Football was the main sport at St Ninian's. I loved football, but it was too bad if you didn't like it. There was also snooker, although I didn't play, and table-tennis. There were two table-tennis tables and I got pretty good.

School

68. When I first arrived at St Ninian's I went to the school there for a couple of days. At that time the Catholic schools went back a week earlier. I hated it because I could see they knew nothing about teaching. After that I was sent to Bell Baxter High School in Cupar because I had been at St Mungo's. It was also a senior secondary school. I went there by bus with the other two or three boys I shared with.

Trips and holidays

69. I can't recall any boys being able to go home at all. I certainly never did. Twice we went to Glen Gonnar Camp in Abington. It was fine and it was an escape. On Saturday and Sunday afternoons we were allowed to go into the local village, Falkland.

Birthdays and Christmas

70. There were no celebrations of birthdays or Christmas at St Ninian's.

Visits/Inspections

71. I think I saw Mr Barr, my children's officer, once while I was there. I don't recall any other inspections.

72. I never had any visitors while I was there.

Healthcare

73. I was only at the dentist once while I was at St Ninian's and that was for a check-up.
74. I was seldom ill and got all the necessary jags at school. The only health issue I had was misshapen toe bones due to bad footwear. I had to wear bandages with splints at night and I had to attend hospital too.

Communication

75. At that time, the only way we could communicate with relatives or friends outside St Ninian's was by letter. This was seriously compromised as all our letters, both in and out, were read by Brother [REDACTED] MIC [REDACTED]. This, of course, limited what we could say about the place. I wrote to my aunt [REDACTED] and sister [REDACTED], but couldn't tell them what was going on.

76. After I ran off one time, I wrote letters during my school lunch hours. My friend [REDACTED] agreed to post them for me. I told [REDACTED] to reply to the [REDACTED] address in [REDACTED]. Unfortunately my aunt was in such awe of the Catholic Church that she seemed afraid to follow it through. If she did, nothing was done as far as I'm aware

Discipline

77. Discipline was harsh. There needed to be structure, but there seemed to be rules for everything. The least wee thing was dealt with harshly. Any time any rules were broken, punishment was corporal.
78. We were all given 'charges' or chores. I only had charges to do in the evening during the week because I was going to school, so I was given a bigger job to do at the weekend. I was given one of the big reception halls to do. It had a stone floor and I had to sweep it, scrub it and mop it. I then had to polish the steps leading up to another hall with a wooden floor. It was a big job and took me virtually all of Saturday morning to do.

Abuse at St Ninian's

79. Brother [REDACTED] MIC [REDACTED] He was otherwise known as [REDACTED] MIC [REDACTED] because he had this strip of hair at the side. He would lose his temper a lot and make examples of boys and we all had to sit and watch. He would put the boy across a chair, still dressed, and leather him with a belt. They called that 'turning up'. Whenever he did, he would jump up in the air and come down with weight. He got the name [REDACTED] MIC [REDACTED] because of his bald head and this bit of hair that used to flop about. This was shortened to [REDACTED] MIC [REDACTED]

80. Brother MIC was a bastard. Turning up was part of the regime and was pretty frequent. He was universally loathed and feared as a sadistic martinet who enjoyed meting out corporal punishment. He was seen as untrusting and unfair.
81. An occasional punishment dealt out was beating the soles of feet with a belt. This was not a regular occurrence as far as I know. It was done to me on one occasion when I had a light on in the dorm because I was trying to finish homework. I was given a couple of slaps.
82. ██████████ seemed to be about the only boy who would get away with anything. The reason was that he was reporting back to Brother MIC I was in the local shop one Saturday and ██████████ happened to be there too. He told me to put a pat of butter in my pocket and I did. I had never stolen in my life before. That evening I got hauled out and accused of stealing. It could only have been ██████████ that told him. Brother MIC took me to a room at the back of one of the classrooms and I got thoroughly thrashed with the belt across my backside. He must have hit me more than twenty times. I remember I burst into tears and I noticed as I cried that he actually seemed to be enjoying it more.
83. I became friendly with a girl in the village, ██████████ Her parents were fantastic. MIC got hold of me after night prayers one night and challenged me about seeing a Protestant family in the village. He told me not to see them again and with no warning punched me in the face. It came out later that they had been in touch with the children's welfare department and had been enquiring about adopting me.
84. One Saturday, I was in the library reading a book that happened to be very left-wing. I was sixteen by this time. MIC came in and told me it was bad stuff and I shouldn't be reading it. He grabbed the book from me and threw it on the floor. He told me to pick it up and when I bent down to do so, he kicked me in the face. I lamped him one and he just said "You'll not be so frisky tonight".

85. After that I ran off and was away for about a week. When I was returned I knew I would be punished severely. I prayed I would not give [MIC] the pleasure of seeing me cry. After lights out the door opened and Brother [MIC] summoned me outside. I was in my pyjamas and got taken round to the washhouse. There waiting were Brother [MBR] and Brother [MBW]. I was told to take my pyjamas off and bend over the foot basins. I was naked. Brother [MBR] and Brother [MBW] held my ankles and my wrists and Brother [MIC] laddled into me. He hit me on the back, he hit me on the buttocks and on the legs. He gave me thirteen strokes that cut into me, but I wouldn't cry.
86. I also saw Brother [MBR] strike a boy across the face with a broken-off pool cue. He was a nasty piece of work. For some reason there is no mention of him in any records. Reference is made to there being three brothers, but there was always four.
87. I was also the victim of an attempted sexual assault. When I was sixteen there was a visiting brother at St Ninian's for a few weeks. I don't know his name. He got talking to me and we would go out for walks. One time he took me for a walk through the woods in the grounds and we sat down. I noticed that he seemed to be shaking a bit. He was talking incoherently and had gone into some sort of trance. I was wearing shorts and the next thing his hand was on me and he was stroking my bare thigh. He didn't force himself on me and I managed to extricate myself. He was a man in his thirties with dark hair, average build and quite tall. I'm not sure if he was Irish or not.
88. I saw no evidence of any significant abuse from Brother [LHC] or Brother Fitton. Although Brother [LHC] 'turned up' a couple of boys, he didn't do it with any relish.

Absconding from St Ninian's

89. After the incident in the library I made up my mind I was going to run off back to Glasgow. Some of the other boys gave me money and I walked all the way to

██████████ My friend ██████████ stayed there and he helped me out with some money too.

90. I ran away to ██████████ and saw my aunts and sister ██████████ there. I never told them I had run off. I was afraid to go to my aunt ██████████ because I didn't know how she would react. I left ██████████ and slept out for a few nights. Eventually I went to my aunt ██████████ who told me the police had been at the door. She took me back by bus to St Ninian's. Brother ^{MIC} ██████████ told my aunt ██████████ I would have to be punished for absconding. He said I would get a few slaps on the hand. I accused him of being a "lying bastard". ██████████ was shocked.

Leaving St Ninian's

91. I left St Ninian's not long after that. It was 1957 and I was sixteen so I could. I wanted to stay on at school, but I had to get away from the home. I arranged this with the children's officer. I went to Hamilton and stayed in digs for a few months with an elderly couple and became a junior furniture salesman. I then went to stay with another couple and after that, I moved through to Edinburgh. I stayed in a hostel in ██████████ Street and I have been in Edinburgh ever since.

Reporting of abuse at St Ninian's

92. None of these things were recorded.
93. I told my friend ██████████ about the beating I got when I had run away. I told him I had got a right pasting. He couldn't believe it and I showed him the marks. Even though I told him not to, he told one of our teachers at Bell Baxter, Mrs King, our English teacher. As a result I got called into the Rector's office and asked about what had happened. He asked to see my injuries and, from memory, he called a doctor in and the police were called in. There was an investigation and all the other boys from the home who were at Bell Baxter were called in. They corroborated what

I said and the children's welfare officers from their different areas were called in the following week.

94. Nothing more was done about it though and there is no record of it. I have since read that the first recorded complaint was in 1989.
95. I never reported the attempted sexual assault. I didn't think I would be believed.
96. I also reported an incident to the parish priest for Falkland. I can't remember his name. I had been playing the Benediction on the organ and played it differently to usual. At the end of it Brother MIC came up to me and questioned why I had done so. I told him because it was beautiful. He replied "Here's a bit of beauty for you" and he gave me a heavy slap to the face. The priest came up and questioned what was going on. I told him, but nothing was ever done about it.

Life after being in care

97. After meeting my wife she encouraged me to get my qualifications. I did so and have been teaching for a number of decades at I am still working, albeit part-time, and I travel around the world as a guest lecturer at various educational institutions. I am also a member of the British Psychological Society. We now live a comfortable life.

Impact

98. During my time at Smyllum I developed obsessive-compulsive disorder. This has plagued my life since. I also used to eat the lead from my pencils while I was there. Later, in my early teens and for about six years, I started eating soap.
99. Without a doubt, the impact on me of my time in care has been detrimental. My confidence was diminished and is still lacking. I hate attention and even now I get

embarrassed speaking out to my peers. I can stand up in front of a class and give a lecture, but that is because I'm always very well prepared.

100. Despite being academically very capable, I still have an inferiority complex. I have no doubt this comes from the constant putting down I received in care. Being told "You are nothing".
101. I left school with absolutely no qualifications. I had gone from being in the top of the class, however I just had to get away. I didn't feel prepared enough to sit exams. The hour we had for homework was nowhere near enough for the work I was given at Bell Baxter. The result was that I fell behind and my self-esteem was shattered.
102. I think that one of the worst things you can do to a child is to undermine their confidence. I felt that being in care did that for me and I know that I have been guilty of behaving in the same way. I know the destructive impact it can have and I believe it is the way I was treated that has caused me to behave similarly on occasion.
103. I think I am quite a resilient guy, but when I first met my wife I was in danger of alcoholism.
104. I think about my time in care every day.

Records

105. I got something from the Scottish Office years ago, but there was lots of stuff redacted. There didn't seem to be very much information and certainly nothing of substance.

Involvement with Survivor Groups

106. I was involved with INCAS about twenty years ago and I knew Frank Docherty. I left because there was too much in-fighting amongst them. I am no longer involved with any survivor groups.

Other information

107. I think some lessons have probably been learned already. The Social Work (Scotland) Act of 1968, highlighted the issues of children in need of care and protection. I think there is much greater awareness since then. Large homes have ceased to exist.

108. I have read the testimony given by Michael Madigan at the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry Oral Hearings relating to the Christian Brothers. I find much of it inaccurate and untrue. It seems to me to be very superficial. I would contest and contradict a number of elements of his testimony. It seems to me that the place in Dublin where Mr Madigan got his facts pulled the wool over his eyes. Interestingly enough, I have established that when Brother MIC retired he became an archivist for the Christian Brothers.

109. One of my hopes for the Inquiry would be that these inaccuracies and untruths are bottomed out.

110. 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.

Signed  AAY

Dated  07-09-2017

