

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Doris WALKER

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is Doris Walker. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1945. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Staff arrangements at Quarrier's village

Recruitment

2. I worked at Quarriers when I was eighteen, going on nineteen. I lasted a month. I got five Highers at school and I needed a summer job, so I looked around for something to do. I must have been between school and college. I thought I'd write to Quarriers to see if they needed some help. I got the job as a mother's helper. This was in 1964.
3. I grew up in Gourrock. I didn't know anyone at Quarriers at the time. My mother was in the mother's union at church and they had links with Quarriers. They used to fund raise and such like. My sister wrote to me while I was working at Quarriers and it was addressed to Cottage 30. I can't recall if that's the one I worked in or the one I lived in as there was a staff cottage where I slept.
4. I went to Jordanhill College studying to be a teacher. I thought this would give me good experience working with children. I had taught in Sunday school and helped out if there were any children around. Quarriers didn't ask if I had any experience.

5. After writing the letter to Quarriers I can't recall what happened next, but presumably they wrote to me telling me they had accepted me and I had the job. I did not get an interview.

Structure

6. Quarriers was like a small village. It had an office building, a small shop and a church. The cottages were like old Victorian houses, big houses. On the surface quite a nice looking environment. A lot of open space, it was spread out and airy. I can't remember how many cottages there were.
7. When I wrote the letter to the Inquiry I kind of had the number of children in the cottage as twelve in my head, but thinking about it later it couldn't have been as many as that because my mental picture is not of that big a number. Twelve is a lot of children in a house. It must have been nearer eight, that kind of number.
8. There was an upstairs and downstairs in the cottage. I can't remember ever being upstairs. The children's bedrooms were upstairs as well as the house mother's bedroom. Downstairs was a big, big kitchen, with a big pantry off it and an old fashioned wood range, which was a nightmare, and a dining room. There must have been a sitting room but I can't remember being in it.

Role

9. My role was to help the house mother with the children and the cooking. She must have had a cleaner because I never had to do housework, either that or the children did it, but I don't remember seeing someone else coming in. I had to prepare the food, help with the cooking and serving it. A lot of the time I was just entertaining the children and keeping them out of the house.
10. There was another cottage in the grounds where the staff slept. I was in there. I didn't see any other staff in the cottage that I stayed in. It was kind of nerve wracking because it was out in the country and I'd never lived away from home. I was aware

that there were other people around but I never saw anyone else. I let myself in. I had my own room and that was it.

11. There was a young couple who were in charge of the next cottage to us. I saw them a few times but in retrospect, people kept themselves to themselves in Quarriers, looking after their own cottage.
12. I had one day off a week while I worked at Quarriers and I went home. I was paid for my time there. It was a summer job.

Life at Quarrier's village

General

13. The children in our cottage were aged between three and I think the oldest was twelve years old. They were all primary school children. There were two three year old boys and one of them was called [REDACTED]. I can't remember any other names. It sounds terrible but all through my teaching years I was able to remember the children's names for that year and then move on to the next year. I'm very poor with names.
14. It was mixed with boys and girls. I'm not aware if there were family members together. I had to take them out. There was a school in Quarriers so the children would have gone to that, but I was there during the summer holidays.
15. One little boy came part way through my time there, just before we went on holiday. He came from Gordonstoun. He was on a scheme to help deprived children I think. I got the impression the children were at Quarriers for a long time.
16. I believe they were adequately clothes. I don't remember being put out in any way by how they were dressed. There must have been a laundry system, I can't recall the house mother washing clothes and I certainly didn't do it. I was very much under the

thumb and at that age, being quite a naïve youngster, I didn't have the gumption to question anything or stand up to her.

First day at Quarrier's village

17. I remember my first day very vividly. I must have gone to the office or reception area, because when I finished there I'd gone to the office. I suppose now you would call them Human Resources. The lady there that I spoke to later must have directed me but I honestly don't remember.
18. I started on the first week of July. I was told to go to the cottage I was working at. I can't remember what number it was. It was a lovely summers day. The house mother was an elderly looking lady in my eyes; she was in her late fifties. She was certainly a lot older than I expected her to be. She was talking to the couple who ran the cottage next door, a young couple, and was bemoaning the fact that she was given another child to look after, i.e. me, instead of sending her some proper help. So it wasn't a good start.
19. I don't even remember if I went into the cottage because she was talking to them outside. In my head her name was Miss **QEH** but that could be wrong. I can't remember if that is her name. I don't know because around about that time, or shortly after, I befriended an elderly lady in the church and I used to visit her and quite honestly I cannot remember if I've confused the two names. I know **QEH** is the name of one of them but I couldn't tell you which one.
20. She told me to look after two three year old boys who were playing outside. I can remember the name of one of them because he couldn't say his name properly. He called himself **██████** and when I said **██████** he insisted that was wrong and that it was **██████**. I can't remember the other little boy's name.

Mornings

21. I went over to the cottage to help get the breakfast ready for the kids maybe about eight o'clock and I'd have breakfast with them. Breakfast was something else again. I can't recall the food, what they had for breakfast. I don't remember any sort of cheerfulness or banter at the table.
22. The children daren't drop a crumb. After breakfast we all, including myself, had to stand with our backs to the wall and stand there for however long it took her to walk round the table, while she checked for crumbs or mess then check their bedrooms for any untidiness. I can't imagine how I could have allowed it.

Mealtimes

23. I had a bit of experience at home when I used to help my mother and days when my mother was working, as a teenager I would help get the meal ready with my sister.
24. I peeled endless potatoes, etc. They had full cream milk delivered that had to be poured into a big bowl and then put into the pantry so that she could skim off the cream. The kids had milk puddings most days. The milk in the morning was put in a big pot and left on the range to heat up gradually during the course of the day.
25. There was a big table they all sat round. They didn't speak. The food was good. Good wholesome food. It was delivered to the house.
26. During all meal times the children had to sit quietly and eat and they daren't make a mess. They would have to sit at the table until they ate it. That was normal in those days. I remember as a child at school being made to sit and eat dinner.

Bedtime

27. I wasn't involved in bed time routines. I finished work after dinner time.

Leisure time

28. I can't think of toys or books in the cottage. There were no toys outside. They just ran around and played. It was a big age range. Most of the time the children had to be outside. I can't actually remember entertaining them inside.

Trips and Holidays

29. Our cottage went to a holiday home in Ayrshire. Apparently some wealthy person donated the use of this house or cottage to be used by Quarriers. Our house mother seemed to know him quite well. It must have been a couple of weeks into my time there. We were taken down by mini bus. There was the house mother, me and the children.
30. It was a nightmare because I was living with her. I spent the whole time trying not to put a foot wrong or let the children put a foot wrong. You didn't know when she would flare up about something. For example, one of my duties after breakfast was to rinse out the tea towels and hang them out. One morning I did this and when I went in I got a torrent of abuse from her because apparently this wealthy man had arrived at his house and she accused me of trying to attract his attention. She lambasted me in front of the children.
31. I have this memory of it being next to a disused airfield and of the children running around this big concrete area. The children just had to keep out of her way. The house mother took the view that this was her holiday. She wanted her own time in the house. I took the children to the beach and I was given a time to return and I daren't be home early.
32. I must have had to be up to help with breakfast. I assume we must have brought food with us because I just had to help in the preparation and serving of it. We went to the beach, sat on the beach and played around.

33. I have no happy or good memories while I was there. I had nice times with the children on their own but in the cottage and in the holiday home everyone was too uptight. We were too scared that we would upset or offend her to relax. On holiday she had a room of her own. I shared a room with I think three other girls. There were two sets of bunk beds and I was on the top bunk.

Healthcare

34. When we were on holiday the other little three year old boy injured himself. He was running with a stick and it went through the roof of his mouth when he fell. It was awful. She got a taxi and took him to the doctor but she was very unsympathetic. He was in real pain.
35. On the way down one girl was terribly travel sick. Again, she was very unsympathetic. She made her sit on a newspaper and she daren't be sick again. My mental picture puts her at about five or six years old.

Religious instruction

36. In the cottage I don't know about religious instruction. We had to go to church on Sunday, which was in the village. The children had to look their Sunday best.
37. Moving to Australia was lauded as being something wonderful. I have a vague memory of the minister at Quarriers mentioning Australia at the service. I was aware that children were in Australia.

Work

38. The children had to do chores, which was acceptable. If you have a big family, housework is acceptable. They would wash dishes, clear up. They had to leave their bedrooms immaculate or the house mother went ballistic.

Visitors

39. I can't recall children having visits or seeing their family. I can't recall any external inspections while I was there.

Personal possessions

40. I can't recall if the children got pocket money and I don't know if any had their own possessions.

Discipline and punishment

41. The house mother would regularly go ballistic. She had the temper of the devil. She would shout and bawl at the children and she would hit them with anything she had in her hand. I was really frightened of her. This was regularly done. Thinking back to those days, that was fifty years ago and parents did smack their children. I didn't grow up in that kind of house. My parents didn't smack my sister or myself and also we didn't get a lot of shouting in our house. We had a very happy, pleasant childhood, but a lot of families didn't have and a lot of children were smacked. But even allowing for those days I was shocked by her behaviour. It was quite excessive. I was very frightened of her.
42. I didn't discipline the children any more than telling them off for misbehaving. I would say the children were quite cowed. I didn't have a problem disciplining them. Normally with a group of children they are high spirited but I can't remember high spirits with these children.
43. I've told you about standing with their backs to the wall. This could be used as a punishment. I can't recall any rules as such, just everyone doing their damndest not to upset her.

Abuse

44. She was very handy. One example of this was when one of the older boys didn't do something properly in the kitchen and she was coming out of the pantry with one of the big industrial size tins of fruit in her hand. She hit him several times about the head and shoulders with it. You don't know how to react, what can you do? She struck him several times. This was before the holiday. After the holiday I realised I couldn't continue to work there and I was quite distressed about the way the children were treated.
45. The boy's arms must have been bruised from the tin of fruit. He had them up defending himself. I can actually picture it. If she happened to be carrying something and someone annoyed her she would strike them wherever she could reach. It was indiscriminate.
46. The one thing that I saw as strange was the way she treated the little boy from Gordonstoun who could do no wrong in her eyes. She took him up to her bedroom to talk to him I presume. If that boy had any allegations to make about her, even at that age I was uncomfortable about her singling out one of the older boys and entertaining him in her bedroom. This would be in the afternoon and I think it was for quite a while. It happened a number of times. It didn't happen on holiday. He never got shouted at and he didn't get hit.
47. It was not a nurturing environment in the cottage. I felt it was quite a damaging environment. The lack of love and care really distressed me. I don't recall any of the children talking to me about it. I would consider her treatment of the children as abusive even in that day and age. I knew friends who got a skelp for misbehaving but this was over and above this.
48. The children seemed to unite and come together. They spent most of their time trying to avoid her or not upset her. I am appalled to say that I was frightened of her and maybe didn't intervene when I should have.

Leaving Quarrier's village

49. After the holiday I had a couple of days off because I hadn't had any time off. I didn't come back in the mini bus and I went home. When I came back to Quarriers I had to get a meal ready for the house mother and the children coming back. I had to start up the stove but she hadn't showed me how to do it. I had to go next door and ask how to do it.
50. The next day I went to the Human Resource lady and told her of my concerns for the children. She was probably in her thirties or forties. She wasn't elderly but not very young. I remember getting quite upset and a bit weepy. I remember her hearing me out but saying, what should I expect. This was a grandmother doing a mother's job, it was hard enough, and I obviously wasn't cut out for it so I should leave and I did.

Reporting of abuse

51. When I left I talked about the abuse with my parents and my husband's sister. It was a really bad experience that I was glad to put behind me. It altered my view of Quarrier's, fund raising and all the rest of it.
52. I'm pretty sure there was no action taken about me telling the HR lady, apart from getting rid of me. I didn't report it to the police.

Records

53. I'm not aware of the house mother keeping notes or records.

Other information

54. I went on to become a primary school teacher. I taught in Canada for eighteen months. I taught children with major psychological issues and learning problems. I also taught for five years at Langlands Park List D School in Greenock. It was for girls aged twelve to sixteen. I taught English and needlework. I had four days

and alternate weekends as care staff as well as two nights a week as care staff. It was a combined job.

55. I taught for all my working life apart from when I had my children. I had a break for five or six years then.

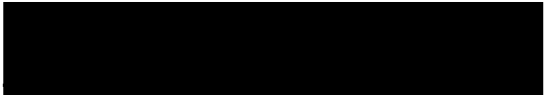
Lessons to be learned

56. I thought it might add to the background of what the Inquiry is doing and contribute in a small way as to what Quarriers was like. Presumably all the cottages weren't run the same way. Some would have been run well. I don't know, it's just my experience of that one. The behaviour of the house mother towards the children was condoned and the management were aware that this is what it was like. If you keep quiet and don't say anything that seems a really negative thing.

57. There would have to be more monitoring of the people that are in charge. There should be more care given, more love given. I don't know why someone who so obviously disliked children was in charge of taking care of children.

58. I don't like being anywhere near Quarriers or talking about it. Once I had spoken about it to Human Resources and I had left Quarriers I just put it out of my head. When I saw something in the newspaper I wrote to the Inquiry.

59. 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..... 

Dated..... *22nd June 2018*