

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

QKU

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is QKU My date of birth is 1947. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I know from my records that my father was a Polish soldier but I have never met him. My mother married another man, I suppose that he then became my step-father.
3. It was only later on in my life that I found out about my time in care before going to Australia. In 2004 I received an envelope from my cousin in Scotland. This contained information about my family history.
4. I was first put into care in 1948 when I was about six months old. This was at Quarriers in Bridge of Weir.

Quarriers, Bridge of Weir

General information

5. Quarriers was a large self-contained village. It had about ten to fifteen separate cottages where the children stayed. There was also a church, school and a shop. Each cottage had a number. I was in cottage 33 for the whole time that I was there.

6. The cottage I was in had three dormitories upstairs. It was all boys that lived in my cottage and the girls had their own separate cottages. The ages of the boys in my cottage varied from a few months old up to teenagers.
7. There were other boys who I remember being in the cottage with me. They were called [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Staff

8. Miss QES [REDACTED] was my housemother at cottage 33. There was another woman, Margaret Campbell, who came to the cottage later. The housemother had her own room in the cottage.

Routine at Quarriers

Mornings and bedtime

9. All the boys would get up at six each morning. I had a shower and then got ready for school. I then went for breakfast.
10. At night, bedtime was around seven or eight. I remember that in the summer it was still light outside and we had to pin a sheet or blanket on the window to keep the light out.

Mealtimes/Food

11. The dining room where we ate our meals was in the cottage. It had two long tables in the room. There was also a scullery which was off the dining room. It was in there that we would wash the dishes. Miss QES [REDACTED] did all the cooking although the older kids might help with this.

12. The food was generally good considering there were a lot of people to feed.

Washing/bathing

13. There was a communal shower area in the cottage where we all washed. There was no set times for using the showers and you could have one whenever you wanted.

Clothing/uniform

14. We always had clothes but I have no idea where these clothes actually came from. I don't remember there being a separate uniform for going to school.

School

15. The school was on the premises within the Quarrier's village. I remember on one occasion when I tried to 'wag' or skip school. I tried to cross the river but was caught when trying to get round the safety barrier which was a large spiked wheel. I had to go to the headmaster, Mr Gray and I was given the belt on the hand. This would be the only form of discipline that I knew of. I was generally good so I never got into much trouble.
16. There was one other time that I remember getting into trouble. I was about eleven and I was scoring at a cricket match. This meant I couldn't leave. I ended up being late getting home. I was chastised for this. I think I might have been given a whack and sent to bed without any food.
17. I would say I was an average student at school. I do remember that my teacher was called Miss QBR

Leisure time

18. The only sports that I played were football and cricket. I don't remember there being any other sports. We also had Scottish dance lessons on a Friday afternoon.

Chores

19. When I was older I was expected to help out with jobs or chores about the cottage. This would be things like cleaning out the fire place or making the porridge in the morning.
20. On a Friday night the boys would have to clean the whole cottage.

Trips/Holidays

21. We once went to Denmark for a week's holiday. We stayed with families and also did a day trip to Sweden whilst we were there. This would have been in 1959 or 1960. There was about ten of us that travelled. I think that there may have been one person from each cottage. We travelled by boat from Newcastle.

Religion

22. I think it was a Presbyterian church at Quarriers. You had to go to church on a Wednesday night. This was in addition to a Sunday when we went morning and night.

Birthdays and Christmas

23. My earliest memory of Quarriers was when I was about three or four years old. It was Christmas time and I was given a pillow case with some presents in it.
24. Every Christmas we would go to the church. It was always decorated for Christmas. There was a big Christmas tree with presents all around it. Every cottage had its own pew where you had to sit. Someone would come to the end of your pew and pass one present along for each child. I think the presents were all donated to the home.
25. When we got back to the cottage there was another bag of presents for each of us.

Visits/Inspections/Review of Detention

26. My mother would visit me once a month. If she didn't come my step father [REDACTED] would come. I can never recall them both visiting at the same time. He was an abrasive older bloke. There was a big age difference between mum and [REDACTED] I think it may have been as much as twenty years. I did used to ask my mother if I had any other family. She would always said no. My mother never explained to me why I was in Quarriers and I never asked her why I was in care. I just accepted that this was where I lived. I had no knowledge of any other life.
27. When my mother or [REDACTED] visited me I would just take this for granted. I was never close to her. There was a little café and shop in the village. We would go there for a drink then whoever was visiting me would take me back to cottage 33. My mother never gave me any pocket money or gifts.
28. I never had any visits from the social workers.

Healthcare

29. There was a medical team at the home however there was no dental care. As a result I am suffering from dental problems now. Everyone used the same toothpaste. It was called Gibb's and was a paste in a round tin. We did have our own tooth brushes. There were no regular dental checks.

Bed Wetting

30. I never wet the bed but I remember that there were some of the boys who did. Miss QES [REDACTED] would get very irate when this happened. The boys who wet the bed would get a clip around the ear and be chastised in front of everyone else. Miss QES [REDACTED] would point at other boys in the dormitory and say that they wouldn't do that.
31. The bed linen would be washed and the mattress taken off. The mattress was put at the big window to dry. I can't remember if there was a laundry at the home.

Other information

32. I used to help out at Mr Munro's house on a Friday night. When I left he would sometimes give me a bag of chips. I felt that this was a treat. One night when I was walking back to my cottage I met a man who I didn't recognise as being from Quarriers. He pinched my chips from me and told me he was taking me to my mother. I was scared and I ran off to my cottage. When I got to the cottage I told Miss QES about what had happened. She just dismissed me and asked me if I was sure. A few days later I found out that the guy was an escaped prisoner. The police eventually found him in Bridge of Weir.

Abuse at Quarriers

33. When I was around ten or eleven I was playing football with my friend [REDACTED] and some other boys outside my cottage. The ball went over the fence so me and [REDACTED] climbed over to get it. When we climbed back I heard QFU shouting from an upstairs window in the cottage. He was saying that we shouldn't be down there and told us to get up to the room. When we got to the room QFU told us to kneel over on the end of the bed. He pulled my pants down and then sexually assaulted the both of us. I have a memory of this happening again on a separate occasion.
34. When this happened to us I think Miss QES and Miss Campbell were at a staff meeting. They weren't in the cottage at the time.
35. I knew QFU because he used to stay at Quarriers although he was older than me. By this time he had left and I think he was in the army. He used to come back with a uniform on and visit the home because he was friends with Miss QES

Reporting of abuse at Quarriers

36. After this happened with QFU I told Miss QES I said to her that he had tried to rape me. Miss QES dismissed me and said that he wouldn't do that to me.
37. I was on my own when I made Miss QES aware of the incident. I don't know if spoke to her about what had happened to him.

Leaving Quarriers

38. When I was about ten or eleven years old I heard about other boys from the home going to Australia. I asked if I could go. I was told that my name would be put down on a list. I then just had to wait.

Migration to Australia

39. We were told that Australia was quite barren and people generally lived on the cusp of the country. I knew myself that it was a big country and that it was mostly desert.

Consent

40. I told my mum that I had volunteered to go to Australia. She said to me that it was probably a good thing and I would have more chance of surviving over there than in Scotland. I still have a copy of the letter that she had to sign to give permission for me to go.

Medical checks

41. I was given a medical but initially failed this due to high blood pressure. The medical covered most things such as eye sight, hearing, urine tests and lung function.
42. When I failed the medical I asked if that was it and I couldn't go. I was told that I would have another check in about a week. When I had another medical I passed it. They said the high blood pressure was probably down to me being too excited the previous time.

Preparation

43. There was no preparation or induction given to the boys going to Australia. No one told us what it would be like. I was in a group of five boys from the home that left at the same time. There was myself, [REDACTED] Hughie McGowan, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I still have a photograph of the five of us.
44. I was given a trunk and clothes by the home for the trip. There were two chaperones who travelled with us. I think that they were nurses. I knew one of them from Quarriers. I don't know about paperwork or anything and I never had any. The chaperones had our passports and other papers.

Transportation

45. I was thirteen when I left Quarriers for Australia. I remember going on the train from Glasgow to London with the other four boys and the chaperones. Mr Munro and Miss QES [REDACTED] were on the platform to see us off. I never said goodbye to my mum. She never even came to the station to see me.
46. I was thinking that this was us going on an adventure. I can't remember any concept that this was me leaving and not coming back.

47. We travelled onto Southampton where the ship was to leave from. We left on the ship in [REDACTED] 1961 and arrived in [REDACTED] 1961. The ship was called the Orion.
[REDACTED]

48. From what I remember the ship journey was good. I actually learnt how to swim in the swimming pool that they had on the ship. I think that there was four of us that shared a cabin. I don't have any bad memories of the journey. We ate all our meals together at set times and the food was good.

49. The first port of call in Australia was Fremantle. We stayed there for a short time. After this we sailed onto Melbourne. I knew that this was to be our final destination.

Arrival in Australia

50. We were told that when we arrived in Melbourne we would be picked up by the supervisor of the home that we were being taken to. I already knew that I was going to a boy's home somewhere out in the country. I had been told this before I left.

51. When we left the ship ^{AIO} [REDACTED], the housemaster from Dhurringile Boy's home, met us. After this I don't think our chaperones were with us any more. Mr ^{AIO} [REDACTED] had an old ten seater Toyota vehicle that belonged to the home. I remember that we left the port and it was a long journey before we reached the home. I remember thinking and getting the impression that the country was very big.

Dhurringile Rural Training Farm, Tatura, Victoria

52. I knew that Dhurringile was run by the Church of Scotland. When we arrived the other boys were waiting to meet us. I recognised some of them from having been at Quarriers. I was still excited about being there. It was a huge place with a long drive up to the buildings.

53. There were three different housemasters when I was there. Mr ^{AIO} was the first then Mr ^{AIP} and finally Mr ^{AIQ}. There were about sixteen boys in the home.
54. One of the buildings was huge. Apparently the home had been used for German officers in the war who had been taken prisoner. There was also a separate cottage where the farmer, Mr Robbins, stayed. There were cattle and pigs at the farm. There was also a large orchard. The farmer had a son called [REDACTED] who was about the same age as most of the boys. He used to join in and play cricket with us.

First day

55. Mr ^{AIO} showed us upstairs to our dormitory and told us that this would be where we were staying. Downstairs there was a big dining room and play area. There was also a laundry room and kitchen. At the back of the building was a boiler room.
56. I met up with the boys that I had known from Quarriers. They told me that the home was great.

Daily routine

57. The routine was much the same as Quarriers. I would get up in the morning have a shower, breakfast then go to school. We had to go to school on the bus.

Mealtimes

58. The food was fine at the home. I can't remember what we had but I didn't have any problems with it. We were given a lunch to take to school.

Clothing/uniform

59. I was provided with a school uniform. I was also given other clothes to wear. I also still had some of my clothes from the home in Scotland.

School

- 60. I went to school at Shepperton Tech. We were driven to the school as it was about twenty miles from the home.
- 61. I would say again that I was average at this school. I stayed at school until year ten.

Farm work

- 62. There was always something to do in your spare time. There was a rota to help at the farm. I would help out in the mornings milking the cows. I would also pick the fruit in the orchard when it was ready. This was all income for the home as the fruit was sold on. At the weekends I would help out by cleaning out the pigsty.

Leisure time

- 63. When I wasn't helping out at the farm I would play cricket and Aussie rules football.
- 64. I had a Saturday morning job at a steel fabricators in Tatura. This was a small village about five kilometres from the home. They made pig troughs. I used to chip off the metal flux from welded joints then paint the weld surface. I was paid for doing this. Eventually I saved up enough for a bike. After this I would cycle to my work.

Washing/hygiene

- 65. There was a large shower block where we washed. This was similar to Quarriers.

Christmas/birthdays

- 66. At Christmas the home would advertise for families to look after the boys during the holidays. I stayed with the [REDACTED] family. I was looked after by them and I am still in touch with the family to this day. Even after leaving Dhurringile I would call this place my home and go there when I was on leave from the navy.

67. It was a positive experience with my holiday family. It was just luck that I ended up with them. I even called Mr [REDACTED] 'Papa' and Mrs [REDACTED] 'Ma'. I learned a lot from them.

Religion

68. Even although there were connections with the Church of Scotland, I never went to church when I was at the home. There was no religious instruction there that I can remember.

Visits/contact with Scotland

69. Before I left for Australia I told my mother I would write every week. I tried to do this as much as possible but it was probably once a month that I wrote. I never received any replies from her. I didn't have any sense of family with her. I would say by this time the people I was staying with, the [REDACTED] were my family.
70. There were no visits from the social work. No one from Scotland ever came to see me. There was no contact from the Church of Scotland to ask how I was doing.

Leaving Dhurringile

71. I left Dhurringile in 1964. I decided that I wanted to join the navy. Mr ^{AIQ} [REDACTED] helped me with the application and I was accepted.
72. After leaving Dhurringile I never went back to visit. My understanding was when I left there that was me, I was on my own.

Life after being in care

73. After joining the Australian Navy I trained to become an electrician. I served on HMAS Sydney and helped in transporting troops to and from the Vietnam war. I served in the navy for twelve years and left in [REDACTED] 1976.
74. Whilst I was in the navy I met my wife. We were later married and had three sons.
75. After leaving the navy I worked with my brother in law for 25 years at his firm, [REDACTED] I then ran my own restaurant from 2001 to 2007.

Impact

76. I would say that my time in care has made me tougher. I wouldn't want other kids to go through what I had to.
77. The biggest mistake by Quarriers was not communicating to me about my extended family. I think that this is something they could have done.

Reporting of Abuse at Quarriers

78. After I made a submission to the 'Time to be Heard' forum I was asked if I wanted to report what had happened to me at Quarriers to the police. I agreed and eventually made a statement to the police in Scotland.
79. The officers that I have been in contact with in Scotland are Detective Constables Nigel Gilmour and James McCabe. I have also been in contact with Linda McDougal but I think that she is an administration person rather than a police officer.
80. I don't know the outcome of the police investigation as there has been no further contact from them.

Records and family tracing

81. In 2004 one of my cousins from Aberdeen in Scotland sent me a large envelope with lots of information about my family history. This was the first I knew of my background.
82. I went back to Scotland in 2005 to meet up with my second Cousin, [REDACTED]. She gave me photographs of my mother and [REDACTED]. There were about three big books of photographs. Some of the photographs were of my mother and step-father on holiday. This made me think about why they could go on holiday but leave me in care.
83. [REDACTED] also gave me photographs of family relatives from years prior. She had old family tree information as well as birth, death and marriage certificates or BANNs as they were known by in those days.
84. When I was in Scotland I visited the Quarriers village where I had arranged to meet Josie Bell. She was able to provide me with my records from my time in care before going to Australia, which included my original birth certificate. I also found out for the first time that my father was a Polish soldier called [REDACTED]. I never met him.
85. In my records there was also a discharge letter from Quarriers that allowed me to go to Australia.
86. I managed to find the house where my mother had lived. I had never seen my mum again after going to Australia.
87. I was contacted by a solicitor when my mother died. I had to agree to her burial as I was the only living relative. At that time I didn't have a passport so I wasn't going to go back for the funeral.

Support/Child Migrant rust*Nationality*

88. When I was trying to get my paperwork together for my Australian passport application I found out about the Child Migrant Trust. Jon Colvin was the Travel Fund Co-ordinator and Ian Thwaites was the Senior Social Worker, for the International Social Service Australian Branch.
89. I didn't have any trouble getting an Australian passport. I got this around the same time as I obtained my British passport. The Trust helped me with the Australian one. They did everything in relation to the passport and visas. They also helped me to claim back my flights to the United Kingdom.
90. I still see myself as Scottish but I am happy living in Australia.
91. 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.....

Witness

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19/10/2018