

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Ron AITCHISON

Support person present: No

1. My name is Ronald Aitchison. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1949. I am 68 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] We [REDACTED] lived in a two bedroom, ground floor tenement flat in Leith in Edinburgh. My parents essentially had a room and kitchen. My father worked as a labourer and my mother had cleaning jobs. We were known to the welfare department of Edinburgh City Council.
3. At ten months old, [REDACTED] I was taken away to Aberlour Orphanage. [REDACTED] The council had deemed it impossible for my parents to look after [REDACTED]. At ten months I have no real recollection of my life then. I have learned a lot about my life from later experience, research and investigation. Before then my life was just a blank page.
4. My parents were [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The Aberlour Orphanage

5. I arrived at Aberlour Orphanage in 1950. I was a baby in swaddling clothes. I was delayed in going [REDACTED] because I was quite sickly. I couldn't travel to the orphanage [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] When I arrived I would only have been ten months old.

Routine at Aberlour Orphanage

6. Aberlour Orphanage was founded by the Scottish Episcopal Church in 1875. The founder was a local Episcopalian Minister, Canon Charles Jupp. However, the institute of the orphanage was not run by the clergy as such. We didn't have nuns or fathers dressed in their religious garb.
7. We had housemasters, housemistresses and teachers. We weren't under religious orders. We had no severe religious upbringing. Religion wasn't forced on us. However, it had its own church and we attended there three times on a Sunday. There would be other occasions we would attend church.
8. I played a very large role in the church throughout my childhood, I was a choir boy, head choir boy, altar boy and bell ringer because I enjoyed it. It was something that wasn't forced upon on me.
9. The church was the first building to be erected. It was built by some Italian tradesmen. The orphanage was built in three separate groups. There was a girls' wing, a school and a boys' wing.
10. The boy's wing and the girl's wing were separated by the school in the centre. The school had a clock tower which was the centre point of the whole orphanage. It was the landmark that everybody could identify with as being where the orphanage grounds were. The clock tower still stands today. It's quite a large tower and it's a

protected building. The structure still stands as a reminder that that is where the orphanage once stood.

11. There were lovely, formal gardens full of flowers and fountains. The boys' and girls' wing were very much based on a Victorian idea of keeping the boys and girls separate. In Aberlour it was a whole block of buildings that were separated by the school.
12. The girls' wing also had a laundry room, a sewing room and domestic science rooms so that repairs and domestic duties could be carried out at all hours of the day. The girls' wing had a grand, hallowed entrance with walls panelled with tiles. It was Victoriana in style.
13. We had huge dining rooms and dormitories. There were twenty beds in each dormitory. The dining rooms could seat seventy to eighty children at a time. The dining rooms were used as entertainment areas.

Canon Dean Wolfe

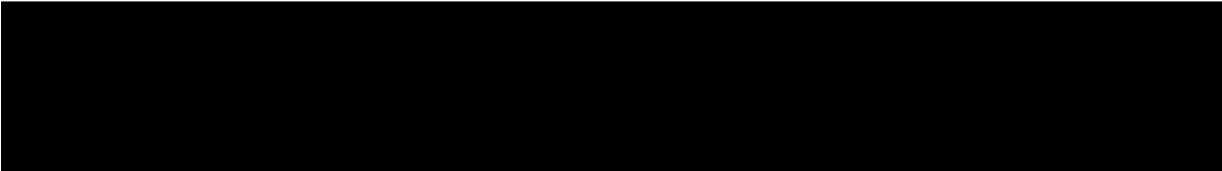
14. The warden of the orphanage was called Canon Dean Wolfe. He was the warden from 1928 until 1958. He was called 'Wolfie' by everyone. He ran the orphanage and lived in. His office was at the far end of the building. He was the most senior figure there. He was also a member of the clergy.
15. Wolfie was a particularly good publicity man. He would go to people such as the Royal Navy at Lossiemouth and he would get them involved to give us "Away Days" at the Navy base. He would ship all of the children from the orphanage, any age and size, by train or by bus, free of charge, to Lossiemouth for the "Navy Days".
16. When Billy Smart's Circus came to Elgin he would go and speak to Billy Smart and ask him to give us a free donation of a circus show at Aberlour Orphanage. He would tell him that we could provide the grounds and the space for the animals, tents and caravans.

17. Canon Wolfe was very good at getting people to donate anything. He would go out in his worst clothes that had tears in them or holes in his shoes. He would virtually go begging in the street. If he saw anybody doing anything that seemed to be quite a good activity he would instantly latch onto that person and, in the nicest possible way, he would be trying to get them to come to the orphanage to show us what they were doing and how they did it, whether it was social history, farming or engineering.
18. He would use his dog collar in the best possible way by taking use of what he saw round about him. If he couldn't get people to see what he was trying to do for the children he would simply ask them for a donation instead. He was very successful at that. He was very much forward thinking.

The Houses

19. Aberlour housed up to five hundred children in the 1960s. The numbers would go up and down. I'm not familiar with the number of children there when I arrived. [REDACTED]
20. The way the orphanage system worked was that when you arrived at Aberlour you were kept within the bounds of the Infirmary up to five years old. The Infirmary was within the main orphanage building. It had cots and a play room.
21. In 1952 the orphanage bought a large tract of land and a mansion house called the 'Dowans'. The Infirmary moved into this house and became a separate unit. They managed to get Princess Margaret to come up and officially open it. It became the 'Princess Margaret Nursery Home'.
22. At the age of four, I presented Princess Margaret with a bucket of sand to open the new nursery. The press were kept at bay. It was a visit for the children. My mother cut out the sentence with my name in it from the newspaper. It's the only thing my

mother ever gave me. She didn't cut out the full article so it was tiny. I was one of the first to stay in the new purpose built nursery.

23. When you were five you went to the main orphanage building. In my case obviously I went to the boy's wing.
24. The boys' wing consisted of five or, possibly, six houses. The first one was called the 'Wee Kids', the second one was Spey House, the next one was Mount Stephen House, then we had Gordon's House and then we had Jupp's House.
25. Jupp's House was named after the founder of the orphanage. Mount Stephen was named after a benefactor. Spey House was called after the local river. I don't know why they called them these names. The bigger houses were Jupp's and Gordon's.
26. You were in 'Wee Kids' from the age of between five and seven, then moved into Mount Stephen at seven to eight, Spey House from eight to nine and a half. I had never been in Jupp's House.
27. 
28. The girls' wing was an odd mixture. They had houses called F1, X19, St Margaret's and I think they had another Spey House as well.

Staff

29. I had fourteen years at Aberlour Orphanage. I saw more staff come and go than I can remember. I do remember a lot of the names. I always remembered my housemasters' names. It was important to remember them.

30. When I was in the infirmary I was looked after by a lady called Miss Dorothy Heap. She was a lovely lady. She was the superintendent in the Infirmary. When I moved to the orphanage proper I came under the guidance of Mrs BHM and Mrs BGY
31. I remember that BBR was the housemaster of Jupp's, Gordon's House was run by BGG for a long time, Mount Stephen House was run by BGX Spey House was run by George Ewen and 'Wee Kids' was run by a lady, whose name has escaped me.

Mornings and bedtime

32. Before bed, you were responsible for taking all of your clothes and folding them up neatly. You would wrap them up in your 'snake belt' which was an elastic clip type of belt, you had to tie all your clothes up and put them at the bottom of the bed. The reason for that was if there was ever a fire, and there had been one or two fires in the past, you could at least grab your clothes and you had something that you could put on. That was the minimum fire requirement that we had to adhere to every night in life.
33. When you got out of bed, you had to strip it, and fold your sheeting so that it was laid out for inspection.

Bedwetting

34. I don't recall how bedwetting was dealt with. I don't think there was a particularly oppressive regime. I think the children who wet their beds simply got a rubber sheet underneath their bedding. There was no punishment for bedwetting. I don't know the psychology behind people wetting the bed but I didn't wet the bed.

Chores

35. The start of the day was either six or seven o'clock. I can't recall why the times were different during my time in the orphanage. If it was six o'clock, it's possible that you were maybe on cleaning duty. There was a regime of doing different chores in the morning. None of them were particularly hard. We would get up and we had to polish the long parquet flooring with very large polishing buffs. I don't recall what age this would start. I don't recall ever thinking "I've had enough of this" or "this is pointless." You did your duties without question and did it fairly well.
36. We all had different duties of our own to do. I think the younger children would be given lighter duties. The children who were coming up beyond ten years old would be given slightly bigger duties like polishing the floors and washing down the marble laid flooring in the halls. I remember polishing the marble and it looked a bit like a hospital. There were long corridors interconnecting different houses and parts of the orphanage.
37. It was kind of run on military lines. We didn't salute anybody but we did call everybody 'sir' or 'madam' just as a matter of courtesy. In fact I continued doing that into my twenties, much to the concern of the public at large!

Mealtimes / Food

38. Breakfast was always served at a specific time of eight o'clock to allow you to get to school in plenty of time. The school was within a short walk's distance from any of the buildings in the orphanage.

Washing / bathing

39. I don't think showers had been invented when I was at the orphanage. We had bathrooms. They had maybe up to six baths. The boys would have a rota for having

a bath. Bath time was at seven o'clock before bed. I don't recall if baths were shared. The housemaster or his assistants would have supervised.

Clothing / uniform

40. We wore a regulation uniform of grey shorts and sandals. We also had regulation haircuts. We had a short, back and sides.

School

41. We didn't attend the local schools. The orphanage had its own school. It was built in a square with the playground in the middle. There was a headmaster. The clock tower housed the school bell. It was the main entrance into the school.
42. We had geometry and maths classes. The teachers were all employed by the local authority. They weren't employed by the orphanage board of governors. The orphanage board of governors employed the housemasters and housemistresses.
43. We wouldn't have had night staff. The reason for that is because the housemasters and mistresses lived in the building. They had their own bedrooms and sitting rooms within the building and they looked after the children at night time. Teachers could sometimes be used to help with the children but they never stayed overnight. The teachers could be asked to look after a house of children. It would only be for an interim period of time, maybe for an afternoon or an evening, if there were staffing difficulties.
44. I left school with no certificates. My understanding is that we were to achieve the 11 plus exam which was en vogue at the time. The teachers just wanted to get us through the schooling programme as quickly as possible. They seldom took any real interest in a child and their development as far as their education was concerned. They didn't take any particular interest. I think the schooling was a particularly poor aspect of Aberlour Orphanage. It was controlled by the education authority that

would be Moray or Banffshire Council. We had regular visits from the school's inspection authority.

Trips / Holidays

45. We had holidays that nobody else had at the time up in Morayshire. The orphanage governors recognised the need for children to go on holiday. In the early part of the twentieth century, they organised train loads and bus-loads of children to go to the local seaside town of Lossiemouth.
46. My understanding is that if the weather was poor, local church groups would take the children to play organised games inside the local halls. If the weather was good we were allowed to explore the different beaches that Lossiemouth has and the train would take us back at the end of the day to the orphanage.
47. Later on, the board of governors bought a large house in Hopeman. They bought this house with a view to housing the orphanage children on a rota basis during the school holidays. That was the only time that we could have boys and girls together under the same roof. Although there was enough individual rooms in the house for us to have our own smaller dormitories.
48. This allowed us to walk down to the local beaches in Hopeman, to explore the shops and to hear pop music in fish bars. It was like a different world to us. It meant that we had holidays that were enjoyable and interesting.

"Orphanage Aunties and Uncles"

49. There was another form of holiday that could be given to the children. It came about if a child was in the orphanage and their parents had passed away or didn't bother to send them a Christmas or a birthday card on their birthdays. The orphanage would go out and seek to find a 'birthday parent'. We called them "Orphanage Aunties and Uncles". By agreement with the orphanage, a child could be taken for a day trip or a week's holiday. I went to two or three different places. I had two or three "Orphanage

Aunties". I had one that lived in Edinburgh, I had one that lived in Musselburgh and I had one that lived in Kirkcaldy.

50. My "Orphanage Auntie" in Edinburgh was a lady called Miss Margaret Clark. She is still alive today. I knew her for quite a long time. I've kept in touch with her and in fact, she was invited to my wedding.

51. I went with these different people to their respective homes and stayed with their families. If they had a pet dog that was a wee bonus. I would take part in their family life for a week, or sometimes two weeks. It was their responsibility to return you to the orphanage by train, bus, car or whatever.

52. It gave the child two things. It gave them somebody that would write to them at Christmas or on their birthday with a card or possibly with a present and it also gave them the opportunity to have a holiday away from the orphanage confines.

53. The school closed for Easter and summer holidays and the "tattie" holidays.

Birthdays and Christmas

54. Christmas and Easter time at Aberlour could be better than everybody else was getting elsewhere. The warden would be friendly with the local Navy Administrator at Lossiemouth. He would get their chefs to either make a large Christmas cake or a very large, four or five foot high, Easter egg. There would be great celebrations in bringing the cake or the egg into the large dining hall with everybody in attendance. In the case of the Easter egg, the warden had the ceremonial hammer that he would break the egg with the Naval Commodore. They made it a nice event for all the kids. They would smash the egg with the hammer then they broke the thing into bits and each child got a piece of the egg. In the case of the Christmas cake it would be the cutting of the cake and everyone would get a piece.

55. They also managed to get very Christmas large trees donated by people for the Aberlour children to decorate. We had very good Christmases at Aberlour whereby

every child was given a present. If they didn't get a present from their parents, they were given one from the orphanage. The orphanage had lots of toys available for every child.

56. The warden had managed to secure one of the dormitories, a very long, large building in the orphanage grounds. Its' purpose was to store the donations of toys that people would bring for the children. The warden would house them in this very large hall.

57. When a child's birthday came along, the warden made a specific visit to that child to remind them it was their birthday. He quite often had a card ready for them and would take them round to this large hall and invite them to go in and choose a gift for themselves. He would assist the children in choosing something that would suit them.

58. They acknowledged your birthday and I thought that was an excellent thing to do. Of course, getting a pedal car or a tricycle to take home with you and have as your own possession was important. They didn't ignore that the child's birthday was a big event for the child. I thought that was a terrific idea.

Leisure time

59. We had a full range of leisure activities. We did cricket, rugby and football. I became particularly good at cross-country running which we would do as an activity.

60. We had our own gymnasium and we also had our own swimming pool. The children in the local village were very jealous of the activities that we had in terms of our swimming pool and gymnasium, which was the latest of its type. It was very well equipped. In fact, I would say that Aberlour Orphanage probably excelled in its' sporting facilities.

61. The housemasters and the warden would organise football games in different villages that we could go and attend. It gave us a chance to see a bit more of the

outside world. Local teams would be invited to come and play at the orphanage against our teams.

62. We had access to some of the things that the local children in the village would not have. We had a better standard of these activities than normal children in society.
63. The orphanage was never a locked institution as there were no locks on the doors. You could come and go with relative freedom.
64. The only rooms which would be locked would be the laundry room to stop children upsetting the laundry system which was all done by numbers. You had your clothes changed every three days so you had to make sure that each child had their vest, pants, shorts and shoes available to change into for the next period.
65. We could earn extra pocket money through doing small chores and duties.
66. We were free to go down to the village in supervised groups. We always walked in rows of two so that we could be easily spotted. We were allowed to go into the village to buy sweets. We were allowed to take a look around the village life to see what was going on, the older ones were allowed to visit the River Spey and to watch the fisherman at their sport. We were virtually free to do most things when we became of a responsible age.
67. I know we had a Board of Governors because we would see the fancy cars arriving on Founder's Day. Founder's Day was a day off school where we could play games on the lawns and do different activities to show the founders and the board of governors how well we were doing.

[REDACTED]

68. [REDACTED]

69.






Visits and Inspections

70. As an adult, I would now assume Edinburgh Council would be contributing to every child's up keep under their charge. I don't recall ever meeting my social worker from Edinburgh Children's Welfare Department for any other reason, other than to be removed from the orphanage.

71. We didn't have a guidance teacher in the school. I can't say that we had any people who were particularly there to guide us through or advise on any aspects of schooling or upbringing. I think we were left to our own devices.

72. The only people that we could look up to for any form of advice would be a school teacher at school or the housemaster/housemistress if you were at home in the orphanage building. There was a headmaster of the school. As far as the hierarchy in the orphanage staff was concerned we had a housemaster. Sometimes, they had an assistant, it could a man or a lady, quite often it would be younger people who were training to come through the social work system . The only person above them would be the warden.

73.  had restricted contact with my parents during my time at the orphanage. I don't recall seeing or being aware of having parents until I was seven or eight years old. 



74. In the 1950s, the distance from Edinburgh to Aberlour appeared great. Aberlour is a very small village in a Speyside community in the North East of Scotland. The visits from my parents were quite restricted throughout my fourteen years and I only met with my parents three or four times during my tenure.
75. We were allowed some time to be with our parents during those visits. The visits were supervised as the orphanage kept an eye on their charge. They acted in the interests of the child rather than the interests of the parents.
76. In Aberlour village there was a glebe which was an area of ground that people could tent into. Camping and cycling in the fifties was very much part of life in Scotland. They were very popular.
77. I recall my parents arriving in Aberlour from Edinburgh during the holidays on a tandem bicycle with all of their camping equipment. They had everything with them that you needed to have a camping holiday. My parents set up their tent on the village glebe.
78. They would come and visit [REDACTED] at the orphanage. They would give [REDACTED] things that [REDACTED] wouldn't normally be able to get like sweeties or ice cream. They would try and do their best to be nice [REDACTED]. I always got on quite well with my parents but there was never love or affection. There was never adoration between myself and my parents. These were just two people that came to me and who were very pleasant to me and would maybe spend some time with me.
79. I did return home for a short time when I was around ten years old. It was decided between the Edinburgh social work department and my parents that I could be returned for a trial period. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to my parent's home. [REDACTED] only stayed there for a month and the trial proved to be a failure as they were unable to look after [REDACTED]. Unfortunately [REDACTED] were under nourished and riddled with fleas. [REDACTED] had been used to living in a clean environment in the orphanage. I was returned to the orphanage by the social work department.

Healthcare

80. We had a small six bed infirmary and the orphanage had its own nurse. The nurse could deal with all sorts of things like coughs and sneezes, boils and warts. Where real medical assistance was needed we had to use the services of the local doctors. There was Doctor Caldwell and Doctor Sellers. I had Doctor Sellers as my doctor.
81. We had to be careful of infectious diseases like chicken pox, mumps and measles. The doctor would be brought to give us the injections or the treatment. He would give advice to the warden as to who would be kept in quarantine and who would be isolated and what their care would be. We had a thoroughly good medical care treatment. It was as good as anybody in any other local village would have been getting at the time.
82. We had our own small dentistry chair set up in the infirmary. I don't recall who the dentist was, where he came from or under whose auspices he came from. We did have regular visits from the dentist.

Running away

83. Running away was quite common in the orphanage. However, I had no reason to run away. I was perfectly well looked after with my three meals a day and all the other reasons that encouraged me to enjoy orphanage life.
84. However, that's not to say that when other children arrived from either a broken home or from an abusive household, the first thing they wanted to do was to run away. It was their first criteria. Looking back on it, I think they wanted to get back to their family home.
85. From the orphanage's point of view when these children arrived it became very disruptive. They would try to form a gang and ask young lads and girls to join them to run away.

86. A six or seven year old arriving at an institute is very different from a ten month old baby. I had been brought up in the system rather than being faced with the institution at an older age. It's quite understandable that the first thing they wanted to do was to run away.
87. There was no peer pressure as far as the housemasters and staff were concerned as their job was to try to integrate children into the orphanage routine.
88. Occasionally, when a child arrived, they formed a small gang and two or three of them would run away. Aberlour was set against the Banffshire hills meaning that the orphanage was surrounded by natural barriers. They had to tramp for miles over hills to get anywhere. It was very easy to get lost in the hills around Aberlour.
89. I can understand the warden and the housemaster's concern about a child or a number of children running away. Firstly we had the main road which had traffic on it, secondly we had the railway lines running through the Spey valley and thirdly, beyond that we had a river, a very fast flowing river, the River Spey running through the village of Aberlour.
90. The children would maybe get to the nearest villages which were Dufftown or Rothes. They were about three or four miles away. If they stayed overnight on the hills and they would be wet and cold. They would arrive at somebody's door.
91. The children were all issued with the regulation uniform that consisted grey shorts, jumpers and our regulation haircut. So it would be immediately obvious to anyone that this was a child from Aberlour Orphanage.
92. Quite often, the children would arrive cold, hungry and tired at a local house and would be taken in. They would be put in front of the fire to dry out while the husband nipped out to find a local telephone or cycle to the orphanage to warn the warden that they had a child in their care who had likely run away from the orphanage.

93. The news out spread like wild fire because of the safety factors and the worrying aspect and dangers of running away such as the railway lines and the rivers. The orphanage authorities would send out search parties, the local police would summon support and they would send out a posse to find the children. The safety of the children was always a great concern for the orphanage authorities.
94. The child who ran away would be cared for until the orphanage authorities had been summoned. When they got back to the orphanage everybody asked them how they got on and they quite often told us that they got to London and had tea with the queen! This was a constant exaggeration of what happened but it made good reading.
95. If a child ran away the worst punishment they received was the strap from a housemaster and it had to be done with the warden's permission whilst the warden was in attendance.

Punishment and discipline

96. I was treated very fairly at Aberlour Orphanage and I have always spoken very highly of my upbringing there. I am not aware of any severe outbursts of rash behaviour by the staff. There were records kept on a daily basis by the housemaster in the form of 'day books'. I have in my possession three 'day books' which show a daily log of specific incidents and general routine in the orphanage.
97. I would go to the housemaster if I had a problem. I don't remember having to go to the housemaster with a very serious concern such as a sexual touching issue or a bullying issue. The type of things would be to moan about everyday working aspects of the orphanage. I would say that the staff were perfectly capable of resolving any issue that arose.
98. As a child or youngster, camaraderie was more important than reporting bad behaviour. You would be more concerned about keeping in with your friends because you had to live with them. There were boys who had better skills at some

things than others and there would be small jealousies amongst the groups. None of it was ever unbearable and one learned to cope with it.

99. I never felt that the treatment in the orphanage was excessive or abusive. I had a thoroughly good upbringing there. I was fed three times a day with good food. I was entertained, kept active, we had lots of things to do and we constantly went for walks in the surrounding area. We also had a good school upbringing and we had the best facilities in the area. I haven't a bad word to say about Aberlour Orphanage.
100. There were some downsides. The orphanage sometimes appeared to be understaffed and sometimes employed relatively young staff who were not much older than the residents themselves.

Punishment in School

101. Punishment was normally just a tap across the hand by the tawse. I did get the strap at school and so did everyone else at one time or another. Officially the tawse should be administered sideways across the hand.
102. The school teachers were quite clever in how they issued punishment if they were particularly upset about a child. The reality is that the teacher would ask you to roll your shirt sleeve up and they would apply the strap to you giving you the full length of the strap and it's two tongues of the tawse all the way up your arms almost to your elbow.
103. On a small child that was a very soft and fleshy area. It would leave two stripes in bruises up your arm for days to follow. I think the teachers were particularly vicious and vindictive in that application of the tawse. However, I don't recall any of the housemasters using that tactic. It only applied to the school teachers.

104. I would say 'cuffing of the lug' was done but not severely. I don't recall any child being battered. I recall a teacher called Mr BHT who had a great habit of 'cuffing' children with his hand as he walked past them.

105. Some of the teachers were quite antagonistic towards the orphanage children. They seemed to think that the orphanage children were somehow worse than other children. My impression is that orphanage children were well brought up to respect their elders and to behave decently.

Children Leaving Aberlour

106. My understanding was that children remained at Aberlour Orphanage until the age of fifteen.

107. An interesting aspect to that is that sometimes kids would leave the orphanage but they weren't mentally ready to leave. They would quite often come back to the orphanage seeking solace and assistance because they were having trouble in the outside world.

108. The warden had a particular set of rooms set aside for them. It was called 'a hostel'. It was a set of rooms where they could come and stay but the arrangement with the warden was, if you came to stay they would be happy to put you up for a limited time, up to three to six months but they had to help out and look after the orphanage children.

109. If they were seen to step out of line and misbehave they would be reprimanded or possibly asked to leave.

110. It depended on who the person was, it could be a young lad who had come back and would be asked to help in the gardening department or in the laundry room where there was big equipment. Sometimes the warden would try to find them work in the local community. It wasn't easy to get jobs in the 1950s and 1960s.

111. I think children in an institute looked to peers for guidance and support. As one grows from a younger age into teenage years there is teen adoration for grown-ups that comes through adolescence. I think children in a family environment want to be like their parents but in a residential situation children seek these dynamics from the staff.
112. In terms of vetting procedures for staff, if Aberlour Orphanage put an advert in the local or national papers and they got a response and somebody was prepared to travel to the north of Scotland they were virtually guaranteed the job. That's how easy it was.
113. As a result of research I have done since I have become aware that there was no vetting nor a requirement for child care qualifications or experience. I think one applicant was given the job because he had been in the forces and they thought that was a good asset because he could run the sports club.

Sexual abuse at Aberlour Orphanage

114. I only heard of one sexual abuse incidence during my time (1950-1964) in Aberlour Orphanage. I was about ten years old and it was in the late fifties or 1960. Everybody in the orphanage knew about it after the event. We knew about the children involved. I think they were about seven or eight years old. I don't recall their names. They weren't in my house so their name doesn't stick with me.
115. The housemaster involved in the abuse was called Mr Lees. I heard that he was the perpetrator. He was the housemaster of a different house to the one that I was in. I have forgotten the detail of the name of the house.
116. Mr Lees was subsequently convicted of sexual abuse. The orphanage dealt with it quite professionally and instantly. The police were involved. The orphanage made decisions about the person involved. He was subsequently sacked. I heard through rumour that he was sent to jail. I think it came as a surprise to the orphanage but I think that they dealt with it quite well at the time.

Leaving Aberlour Orphanage

117. Leaving Aberlour was a particularly bad experience. The day that I left the orphanage was the day that I knew that I was leaving the orphanage. I was given no warning or preparation. It had a marked effect on my life thereafter. I have subsequently written about this in different mediums.
118. At eight o'clock one morning when I was getting ready to go to school, my housemaster came to me and said that the warden wanted to see me in his office. That was a very unusual thing to start with. The hairs on the back of my neck stood up, my ears pricked up, my senses were switched on and I wondered what I had done wrong. The only reason I would be going to the warden's office at eight o'clock in the morning was because I had done something that I couldn't recall. However, on the long walk through the corridors to the warden's office I kept thinking to myself "what is it that I have done?". I just could not think what it was that I had done.
119. However, when I got to the warden's office I was faced with the warden and a lady, Miss Talbot, who I recognised from the Children's Welfare Department of the Edinburgh City Council and my failed trial at returning home.
120. The warden asked me specifically what I would like to do when I left the orphanage. The word 'left' stuck my throat. I had never heard of such a thing but being a young boy with respect in mind, I said to him "but why would I want to leave the orphanage?" He sort of blurted out "to get a job of course". I took that in my stride and I then said to him I don't know anything about jobs. He said "this lady Miss Talbot is going to take you to Edinburgh and she's going to get you a job." Again I protested and sort of said "what job am I expected to be doing?"
121. He said to me a word that I never heard before, he said "we could get you a job as an apprentice." I didn't know what an apprentice was. It was a quite a big word for a wee boy. He said "what kind of apprenticeship would you like?" I said "I'd like to be a train driver" because that's what we all said at that time. However, he said they

weren't looking for train drivers then said Miss Talbot could get me a job as an apprentice in electrics. I didn't even know what any of that meant. It was all new to me. I went along with it at first.

122. I then approached it slightly differently and said to him that I couldn't leave because I still had all of my personal possessions in my locker and I had various things to do like say cheerio to my housemaster, my teachers and my friends. He said "well Miss Talbot is going to take you to Edinburgh on the 10.30 train today to get you a job as an apprentice electrical engineer." All of which was beyond my capabilities and understanding at that time.

123.



124. I don't recall us having career advice in the orphanage or in the school. However, the boys were trained in metal working and farming industry jobs. All to prepare us for some day in the future going out to work in these industries. The girls were trained in domestic sciences and trained to be hotel chamber maids and personal assistants in houses and other such careers that girls usually followed at the time.

125. I was never prepared for the one day I would be leaving the orphanage and that this day had now arrived. As far as I was concerned an axe had come down, a door had been closed and I had no say in it.

126. I do remember being terribly upset about it. I explained to the warden that I still had all of my personal possessions. As a youngster, I had collected toys and gadgets, all of which were treasured possessions. I was told that I wasn't to take any of that. In fact Miss Talbot had been given a suitcase by the warden which had a change of clothes and everything I needed for the journey in it for me.

127. I have spoken to other orphanage boys and girls about their leaving and the same thing happened to an awful lot of them.
128. I had no contact with my parents at that time. I don't recall seeing my parents or having any contact with them around this time. They certainly weren't at Aberlour when I left. The impression I got was that it was nothing to do with them.
129. I don't recall being curious about them. Having been brought up as a child in an institute I had no reason to refer to my parents for anything. I had never referred to them for anything in my life. I'm sure that they were well aware that I had been brought back to Edinburgh because I [REDACTED] left the orphanage.
130. I was taken by Miss Talbot by train to Edinburgh. I was handed over to a Superintendent of a property called Ponton House in Edinburgh.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Life after being in care

151. I left Ponton House and got an apprenticeship as a motor mechanic in a garage in Saughton Crescent. I used to cycle to work. I also went to night school to learn about my apprenticeship. I think I started at the garage when I was fifteen. By the time I was nineteen I was selling cars.

152. I stayed at the garage for a quite a long time and by the time I left I was in quite a senior position with them. I was running quite a large operation and became successful within the company.

153. I had found my own digs and employment without any assistance from anybody.

154. I had the impetus to carve out a career for myself. It has caused me to be self-assured about where I was going to be going and how I was going to achieve it.

Impact

155. I didn't get married until I was 26. I lived in digs for ten years or so on my own. I had a lot of financial difficulties and had trouble making ends meet. I had to be quite resourceful in a lot of ways. Eventually as I grew older, I took to drink and became quite reliant on alcohol.
156. I stole money from my long term employer and I got sacked. This became a repetition for the next three or four jobs. I have been able to overcome these issues with the guidance and support of my wife. It's meant that in a career spanning fifty years I think I have had twenty to twenty five jobs. Some long term, some not so long term.
157. I have always been the catalyst for leaving an employer. I think from an employer's point of view I can be problematic and difficult to handle. I'm a bit of a rebel. I say what I think having no issues with the consequences of that [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
158. I have been married to my wife for 42 years now. My wife was nineteen when we got married. We had our first baby quite early on. We have two children. We brought them up in Currie in Edinburgh.
159. I have spoken to my children about my upbringing. I think they are both quite surprised and in awe of how I have managed to come from being a sickly bairn to who I am today.
160. My wife and I moved from Edinburgh to the Aberlour area in 2003. We moved to [REDACTED] next to Aberlour. I didn't know it then but I think it

was to find out and do a bit more research about my upbringing and life in Aberlour Orphanage. I think I was looking for answers at an older age. I found out more about my family and upbringing living there for ten to twelve years than I had previously.

161. At the same time my wife took up a counselling course with [REDACTED] College. She trained to be a person centred counsellor. Whilst she hasn't counselled me as such, she gives me good advice about how I'm feeling and how I'm reacting to certain aspects of my life. I find that very supportive.

Family

162.

163.

164.

165.

166. I have a very strange connection with my family. [REDACTED] We all keep ourselves to ourselves. I don't see them often. We have a very distant relationship. [REDACTED]

167. My parents lived until I was in my thirties. I did see them occasionally. I remember my father coming to seek out part-time jobs when I lived in a bungalow in Blackhall in

Edinburgh. I had no real connection with my father. When he passed away I was at the funeral. However, when my mother passed I wasn't told about it by any of my family.

168. I lived in the Aberlour area for twelve years. During that time, I organised reunions and did presentations about my upbringing in Aberlour Orphanage to various groups such as the Woman's Guild, church missions, primary schools, churches and in all different types of community groups. I do these talks with the backing of Aberlour Childcare Trust and I send donations to them. I organised The Aberlour Orphanage Reunion in 2012 which coincided with the two hundred year centenary of Aberlour village.

169. At the first Aberlour Orphanage Reunion in Stirling in 2001, the manner in which children left had been brought to the attention of a retired member of the board. The poor man had to apologise on the behalf of the orphanage. I think this is a blot on the Aberlour Orphanage's hierarchy. I suppose in retrospect that they thought if they gave the children any warning that they were going to leave it would cause disruption and that was to be avoided.

170. I still have contact with various former residents and enjoy finding out about their experiences.

Documents

171. I have carried out a great deal of research into the Aberlour Orphanage. I have a collection of documents which I have gathered from different places over the years.

172. The documents include the following; a seven foot long computer generated image of The Aberlour Orphanage circa 1930-1967, a collection of letters from The City Of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh Corporation dated 24th January 1951 regarding the applicant's admission to The Aberlour Orphanage, a copy of the Rules and Regulations of The Aberlour Orphanage issued by The Home Office, a collection of letters between Ron Aitchison and his "Orphanage Auntie", Miss Margaret Clark,

Edinburgh dated 1955 and 1956, a collection of press photographs of residents and staff, a series of lists of supporters dating back to the nineteenth century, a Form of Application for the Admission of a Child dated 1922, three 'Day Books' by a housemaster dated 1957 to 1961 and, Maps and Plans of 'The Aberlour Orphanage Estate' dated 1967.

Classmates at Aberlour Orphanage

173. I was at Aberlour Orphanage with some individuals whom I am still in contact with now. My friend [REDACTED] BCS [REDACTED] comes to see me from time to time. He left Aberlour Orphanage at the age of eleven to be placed into foster care. [REDACTED]

174. He approached me in 2006 because he wanted to research his upbringing. I was living in Aberlour at the time. I was able to provide him with various photographs to help with his research on his upbringing. [REDACTED]

175. I am also friends with a former resident, [REDACTED] He lives in Lossiemouth. I am still in contact with him.

Reporting of Abuse

176. I have never reported anything to the police.

Records

177. I have never sought to obtain my social work records. The archivist, at Aberlour Childcare Trust, is called Ann Black. I know that my records are with the trust but I have not asked for them.

Lessons to be Learned

178. I hope to benefit children in care now. I want to explain to children in care about what it was like to be in an orphanage. We were having a better life than they were out of care.
179. There are two things that I believe that the Inquiry should consider, I think the way the board of governors sold and disposed of the property in 1968 was diabolical. In my opinion, they disposed of their assets in Aberlour in a very underhand and unfortunate way. I have a schedule of the properties that the board owned at that time.
180. Secondly, I think that the Chair should consider the role Edinburgh City Council played, not just in my upbringing, but in the upbringing of all of the children that they sent away to different orphanages and institutions. I am thoroughly convinced that they exploited, or took full use of, the Children's Scotland Act 1948 to exercise their rights to remove children and send them away.
181. In my opinion, there is a question mark over why Edinburgh City Council and its Children's Welfare Department sent [REDACTED] two hundred miles away [REDACTED] only to fail [REDACTED] as a [REDACTED] in later life. One of the things I would like to ask the Chair about is why a representative from Edinburgh Council has not been asked about this policy. My thinking is that they were enthusiastically carrying out the edict of the 1948 Children's Act which gave the councils greater powers and I think this was an example of that.

Other information

182. The Aberlour Orphanage relocated to Rubislaw Den North in Aberdeen in 1967. The Aberlour Child Care Trust came into existence after the Aberlour Orphanage closed.
183. 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.....

14th MAY 2018