

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

William WHICHER

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is William Whicher. I was born as William O'Donnell. I changed my name years ago. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1948. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. The trouble seemed to start from the day I was born. My mother had a very hard time when she was having me. We both nearly died. After that my mother was bed ridden. She lasted another five years after that but I was raised by my older sister, [REDACTED]. She was fourteen years older than me.
3. I had three other sisters. [REDACTED] who was the oldest, she was nineteen years older than me. [REDACTED] was eleven years older and [REDACTED] who was nine years older than me. I also had an older brother, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I am the youngest.
4. My sister [REDACTED] was sent to work on a farm in Ireland. [REDACTED] were both locked up in a mental hospital. They had Epilepsy. In those days people were sent to mental hospitals. [REDACTED] died in Carstairs State Hospital. She was 21 years old. They said that she committed suicide. [REDACTED] said that it was an accident. I never met [REDACTED]
5. [REDACTED] had a hard life. She ended up in and out of hospital. She was given electric shock treatment. She is dead too. She lived to her 70s. She managed to raise two children. My sister [REDACTED] died in her 80s. [REDACTED] only died about five or six years ago.

██████ had a terrible road accident. He died in his 50s. He was run over by someone who was driving a stolen car. I am the only one left.

6. When I was five, I was run over by a bus. ██████ had been raising me. I ended up in hospital for about a year.
7. I was then taken to the Handicapped Home in Largs. I think it was called the Largs Handicapped Home. They kept doing operations on me. I'm not sure what they did but I was given experimental treatment. They told my parents that I would never walk again.
8. I remember them telling me my mum had died when I was in the Largs home. When they told me they said "there's no point crying she's been dead a week". My dad had apparently died the year before. I don't remember being told that he had died. I was going through a lot of operations at the time. I think I was drugged up a lot of the time. I found out later that he wasn't my real father. I have no idea who my natural father is.
9. I had to learn to walk again. I wasn't taught any schooling in the home. They were trying to help me to walk. I was in the home until I was around eight. I left with callipers on.
10. I came out of there and went back to live with ██████ for a very short time. We went to St John's Primary School in Glasgow. I think we went there for a few months. It was a very short time. I don't remember much about it. I think it was near the parish church of St John's.
11. I think that the local authority felt that it was too much for ██████. She was expecting her second child by then. They told ██████ that they would give her a break for a few weeks. I'm assuming that would have been the social work department.

Smyllum Park Orphanage, Lanark

Routine at Smyllum Park

First day

12. I remember [REDACTED] turning up at the orphanage. I still had callipers on. The nuns told me that they were giving my sister a break. I have no memory of the journey there or of a social worker telling me anything in advance. I was taken into the main hall. It was very daunting. It looked like a castle with turrets. It was very strict. I remember everyone walking in straight lines. They took me and gave me a proper bath. I had never had a proper bath. I can't remember which nun met me when I first arrived. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
13. I went to Sacred Hearts. It was for younger children. I think I was eight years old. It was the smaller dorm. I think there were about twenty children in it. I can't remember the name of the sister who was in charge of Sacred Hearts. I know that Sister [REDACTED] AGI was there for a number of years. I think I was in there for about a year.
14. I went onto another one. It was called St Anthony's. I remember that Sister [REDACTED] EAD was in charge of it. I won't forget that name in a hurry.
15. The girls were separate. There was no contact with them in the home. They might as well have been in a different home. I only remember seeing girls at school.

Mornings and bedtime

16. The typical day was the main problem. It was the same every day. I think we got up at about half past six. I don't think time was as important in there. I had to get up and say my prayer. I would then make my bed.

17. Then they would parade the bed wetters. The children who had wet the bed would have to carry in their sheets. It would be made clear to all of the other kids that they had wet the bed. Even as a child I knew that it was wrong. I thought that there was no point in hitting them. They weren't doing it deliberately. It was the same kids every day. Sometimes they would grab the sheets and rub it in their faces. They would say "that's what it smells like". The punishment would depend on who was in charge at the time.
18. They had a habit of hitting children on the back of the leg with a strap or sometimes with a ruler. It would leave red marks there.
19. I never wet the bed. [REDACTED] had a big problem with that. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The other kids would have a go at me even though I hadn't wet the bed!
20. It became a bigger problem for me later on in St Vincent's. He wet the bed every day. He would be humiliated by the nuns. I would get into trouble off of the other boys. Up until then I was one of the good boys because I didn't wet the bed.
21. A big weapon for the nuns was to humiliate us. It wasn't the case that they pulled anyone aside. They made sure that everybody knew. As far as they were concerned they were wetting the beds deliberately. I knew what the nuns were doing wasn't right.

Daily Routine

22. We all had jobs. It would usually be cleaning jobs. One job I had was to sweep the yard before breakfast. The nuns would come down and say "okay you can go for breakfast". If I had done the job badly they would hit me. If there was enough time they would make you do it again. If not I would be allowed to go for breakfast but I still got into trouble. They never told me that I had done a good job. It was either bad or I was allowed to go.

23. It was a tricky job. In the summer it was okay. In the autumn it was a bit of nightmare because the leaves would be blowing everywhere. It wasn't my fault. I would gather them but they went everywhere. The winter was the worst because I had to clear all the snow and ice away. My hands would be freezing. I was trying to do it with a brush that had hardly any hair on it. They would give me a shovel to break up the ice.
24. It wasn't my fault but I would get into trouble. They didn't teach us right from wrong. They only taught us wrong. We all had different jobs. It was just luck whether you got a good or a bad one. It depended on whether the sister liked you or not. That was the truth. Some people had cushie jobs.
25. I had another job in the kitchen for a while. I kept getting into trouble in there. They grew their own potatoes. They were stored in the field. By the time I got them they had a lot of black eyes in them. I used to cut the eyes out of them because I hated eating them. I used to get into trouble for wasting food doing that. I ended up being thrown out of the kitchen. I think they got tired of hitting me.
26. I can't remember who was in charge of the kitchen. She was a big woman. I don't think she was a particularly bad person but she always seemed under pressure. I don't think she was inherently evil. She would hit me for taking too long or not doing the job quickly enough. I got into trouble a lot in there.
27. There were advantages to being in the kitchen. It was nice and warm. I could also steal the odd bit of food. I didn't particularly want to lose the job. I just wasn't quick enough. I don't have really bad memories of the kitchen.
28. I was very small when I went to Smyllum. I only looked like a five or six year old. I was skinny to the point of being really abnormal. It caused a lot of problems for me. I was picked on by the other kids my own age because of that. I got picked on a lot because of that and I got blamed for a lot of things that I hadn't done. If someone did something they would say "it was O'Donnell".

29. The nuns didn't care if I had or not. They just came up and hit me. If I retaliated and fought back that just meant that he was going to hit me. Then the nun would hit me too. They didn't ask what had happened. There was no right or wrong. I don't think they cared that I was being bullied.
30. I think one nun must have noticed because a strange thing happened once. I was in the middle dorm at the time. I was playing in the yard and Sister Mary called me over. If a nun called anyone over then they were usually in trouble. Sister [REDACTED] AGI was in charge at the time.
31. I had no qualms about Sister Mary so I just went over. She was a nice nun and she took me by the hand. That in itself was strange. They never took us by the hand. We walked in front of them so that they could hit us from behind and keep an eye on what we were doing. She took me by the hand very gently. We walked all the way up to the dormitory which was about five or six minutes away.
32. When we got there she knelt down in the cupboard and got me out a toy. She gave me it and I didn't know what to say. I was shy and withdrawn anyway but I didn't know what to say. She gave me a hug. I had never had a hug before. This was a big thing. She told me that she was leaving. I was obviously one of her favourites but I hadn't known. That really stuck with me. I could see that she was a bit upset.
33. She had maybe noticed that I was being bullied. I wasn't aware that anybody had noticed. As far as the other nuns were concerned, I don't think they cared if we were being bullied because they were bullying us.
34. I remember one time I got a job picking the strawberries in the orchard. It was a good job. They let me pick the fresh strawberries for helping because they wouldn't last and weren't going to be used. I had nothing to put them in so I put them inside my shirt. I went behind the Rhododendrons and ate the lot. I got a big red mark on my shirt. I got into trouble for that. Ironically I didn't feel that bad when they were hitting

me because at least it was for something. Every other time I hadn't felt like I had done anything wrong.

Food

35. After we had done our jobs, we would go for breakfast. There was one big dining room. The food was pretty bad. Mealtimes were always a problem for me. I think I might have been a bit slow in there. I always took forever to do anything. I was so withdrawn and didn't understand things.
36. I was a slow eater. I never finished my food. I spent half the time trying to take the bad bits out of the potatoes. I was always getting into trouble. Sister AGI would say "you'll be last into heaven O'Donnell."
37. The food was always ropey. It was always the same. The porridge had lumps in it. I think on Mondays we had stew. I remember that Tuesdays were good because we had mince and tatties. We had fish on Fridays. I always knew what I was getting. It was the same every week for seven years. If you didn't finish your meal you got that before you got your next meal at dinner time. It made me late because I was eating two meals. They would leave food overnight and it would be cold.
38. I would be hit for not eating my food. I would always get hit. They would all hit us. It was normal to be hit.
39. Sister EAD would beat me up. She would fly into a temper. Sometimes she would hit me but then she would lose the rag. I would be off the chair and onto the floor. She would kick me when I was on the floor. I curled into a ball and just took it. I never retaliated.
40. She hit me so hard once that I actually broke my tooth. I had to go to school with half a tooth missing. I was at secondary school at the time. I had to go to the dentist because half of my tooth was missing. I wasn't in pain but I could feel the cold air against it. It was very noticeable. I had kind of buck teeth. I went to St Mary's

Secondary School. She said just tell them that you fell. She warned me. The dentist put a cap on my tooth.

41. She was always hitting me. I felt like she was picking on me. She used to grab me by the arm and smack me round the back of the legs. She would hit me with the ladle. I just took it. I just got on with it. Sister [REDACTED] EAD sometimes force fed me. It's very hard to eat when you're crying.
42. After mealtime, we would sometimes get to watch a bit of telly. If I had taken too long with my evening meal Sister [REDACTED] EAD would say to the other kids "there is no time for TV because O'Donnell has taken too long". Then all of the other kids would hate me. They didn't exactly like me anyway but then they had a reason to hate me even more.
43. I was always getting into trouble. Someone would talk and blame me. I would get into trouble and get sent to bed early. That happened a lot.
44. There would be no one else in the dormitory. I would lie there thinking and turning it over in my mind. Sometimes I would fall asleep which caused more problems. The other kids would come in and wake me up. I wouldn't be tired. So I would be lying there thinking away. I wouldn't have minded if I had actually done something. For a start who was I going to be talking to? There were very few people who spoke to me. I was the beat stick.
45. This guy [REDACTED] had been picking on me. It was really playing on my mind. It had been going on for a while. He had a right go at me. One night in my sleep I started beating him up. The nun had to drag me off him. It was a good thing because he didn't pick on me after that.
46. I think being sent to bed early has affected me all of my life. When I came out of the orphanage I couldn't go to bed. I would offer to clean my sister's flat so that I could stay up. She would tell me to go to bed but I would stay up.

47. The nuns were always in the dorm watching us. We weren't allowed to talk. If anyone spoke then there would be trouble. I had to ask permission to go to the toilet. I wouldn't ask to go at ten or eleven or I would get into trouble for not going before bed. It would be okay if I woke up in the middle of the night and had to go. They were quite strict about that.

School

48. After chores in the morning, we went to school. The school was in the orphanage. The nuns taught us. I am not sure how much they knew. I got off to a bad start in my first week. I remember one day everyone was singing. The nuns said that someone was singing out of tune. The boy next to me, [REDACTED] said "it's O'Donnell". It probably was because I had never sung with anybody before. She said "be quiet". I took it literally. I didn't take part in any singing lessons again. I used to sit at the back of the class with my sums book. That's probably why I became so good at maths.
49. I think when I got to secondary school the teacher asked me why I wasn't taking part. I said "I'm excused". She got me to sing 'do re mi' or something like that. I did it. She told me I was alright but I don't remember ever taking the lessons. I think I just reverted back and it never came up again.
50. I was hit a lot but I wasn't a troubled kid. I was so withdrawn that I wouldn't say boo to a goose. I was smaller than everybody else. It wasn't that I was causing trouble it was that I was always getting into trouble. I wasn't a bad kid. I never answered back. It's not like I was being cheeky. I wasn't deliberately doing things.
51. I did very badly in the first year at school. I was nearly eight. The others had already been to school for a year or two. I had trouble catching up. I hadn't been taught when I was in the Largs school. It was like I was starting a race behind everyone else. I was two or three years behind in the race. There was no appreciation of that in there. I didn't get any extra lessons.

52. By the time I got to secondary school, I really spurred on. I gradually got better. I was always finishing second or third but I found English hard. My spelling was bad. I would always get marked down for it in subjects. In other subjects that didn't involve English, I finished first. I did exceptionally well. I would get over 90 percentage in most of the subjects.
53. I remember when I was fourteen, I was approached and asked if I wanted to go onto further education. I immediately said no because I thought it meant staying in the orphanage. I just wanted to get out of there. I must have been doing okay for them to offer for me to go onto another school.
54. A lot of the nuns weren't actually well educated. I think that some of them were off the farm or their fathers didn't have a dowry so that's why they became nuns. It wasn't because they had a calling.
55. I remember in the third or fourth year, I used to get into trouble for answering maths questions. They'd say "give someone else a chance." A lot of the time I would be the only one with my hand up so they'd have to ask me. The spelling and English was a nightmare. The trouble with English is that it involves everything. I would run out of time trying to get round the spelling. I would lose marks.
56. We used to get homework. That was actually a good point for me because I could gain some favours by helping some of the other kids with their maths. I used to try to get someone to help with my English. I couldn't get them to write it because my writing was so bad that they would have noticed.
57. I have actually turned out to be alright. I even wrote a little book for my grandchildren. It was only meant to be a few pages. I thought that my gran-daughter was afraid of mice. So I wrote a book about why she shouldn't be afraid of these things and try to understand her fears. It was only meant to be a poem but I had to stop after fourteen pages. I thought "this is going on forever!"

58. After school, we got changed into the other clothes. We had to do our work first before being allowed to play. I might have to clean the dorm. I had to use a block to polish the floor. I spent a lot of time doing that. Everybody was always doing something. We generally had to tidy up. Sometimes we got a bit of time to play in the yard.
59. After the work had been done, we had a shower. I think that was before supper. We had a shower every day. It was communal showers. I only ever had a hot bath on the day I first arrived. The water was always cold. I don't know if it was cruel or if they had an inefficient boiler system. The youngest went first. By the time it came to me the water was ice cold.
60. They had a habit of coming up and looking behind our ears. It was an excuse for them to hit me. For a while I would wonder what I was doing wrong because I had cleaned behind my ears. I realised it was just a case of them wanting to hit me.
61. I used to hate the shower time. I was small in every department. I was like a kid that had never grown up. The other kids had started developing but I hadn't. I was so skinny. My arms were so skinny. It highlighted how skinny I was. I used to hate that time. The nuns was there watching everything. It was all open.
62. I think we brushed our teeth with powder toothpaste. I can't remember if we had our own toothbrush. I don't think we did. I mean there would have been nowhere for us to keep it. I think everybody used the same one. I didn't have a toilet bag or anything. You weren't an individual as far as they were concerned. They called me 'O'Donnell'. There were no first names. I don't know why I remember [REDACTED] the bully, by his first name.
63. I didn't have any of my own possessions. They gave us a school uniform and some play clothes. They give us shoes once a year. When we outgrew them we swapped with the other kids. There was a [REDACTED] on the premises. He had a little shop near the orchard. I remember going there all the time to get my shoes repaired. If

someone had a good pair of shoes someone would nick them anyway. They gave us into trouble for having our shoes stolen.

64. A lot changed after 1961. They gave us more clothes and shoes. I got more pocket money. It was enough to buy a sweet. I used to buy a penny caramel because they lasted longer.
65. The dining room changed from being in with about a hundred others to being in with twenty or thirty other children. We sat at tables instead of big long ones. I don't think the dormitory changed.
66. We were allowed out the orphanage after 1961. Prior to that we were only allowed out twice per year. I remember we went to the cinema once and to Lanimer Day. They must have got more money from the government because a lot changed after 1961. We were allowed to go to the cinema on a Saturday afternoon. Sometimes I would go to the lake. I was just glad to be out. I would just go and mess about at an old Army training barracks.

Holidays

67. I was always sick on the bus going on the holidays. I was the world's worst traveller. They would have buckets on the bus. We went to Perth for holidays. I remember going to a camp. We had a countdown for going on holiday. In the days leading up to it we would sing a song. We sang "no the day but the mora". They gave us money to go to the tuck shop there. I usually didn't have much pocket money left because it had been taken off me for breaking a window playing football.
68. The best two weeks I had in the orphanage was when I had the mumps. The first couple of days I was a bit sore. I was isolated in the hospital part because it was contagious. I was left there on my own for two weeks. They had toys and everything in there. There was nobody to stop me playing with them.

69. In the orphanage you couldn't ever be alone but I was left to play with them. I didn't ever get the chance to be alone. It was like the time with the strawberries that I hid in the bushes because I got to eat them alone. I think having the mumps was better than a holiday. I don't think I saw a doctor the whole time I was in there. I think I saw a dentist later on when I was about twelve. The only dentist was in town.

Birthdays and Christmas

70. I remember once I borrowed some chocolate off of someone because my birthday was coming up. I said "I'll give you it back". My birthday came and I didn't get anything. I got in trouble with the boy. I had no expectations after that. I think I had just thought that because it was my birthday I would get some chocolate. It was one of my first birthdays in there. I was young.

71. My sister [REDACTED] later told me that she had sent parcels in for me. I just never got them. She swore that she sent lots of parcels in. She wasn't a devious person and wouldn't lie about that. It would have been hard for her because she had her own kids to bring up. She didn't have much.

72. She came to see one Christmas. We had already been given presents. She brought some more because it was a surprise visit. They took the other presents off me. The ironic thing was that the first presents were actually better. I stayed and played with them because I knew that they'd be gone when I came back. They took things off me. I think that every child got a present on Christmas Day.

73. After Christmas my toys would be gone. They only ever lasted a day or two. I remember trying to grab some of the discarded toys. I might have found a little lorry with a broken wheel or something.

74. The most enjoyment I got was with the bees and the daddy long legs. I used to keep them as pets. I know that it is cruel but I used to take the wings off of them. I used to put them in a jar with some flowers. I had no fear of the bees and I'd let them run

over my hand. I would play with them. I look back and feel bad. They were my pets and I thought I was looking after them.

75. The good thing about bees was that the other kids were scared of them. Nobody was going to come and take my bees off of me. They didn't even like the daddy long legs. They scare people because of their long legs.

Visits/Inspections

76. I wasn't visited by anyone from social work. There was no sign of a social worker. My other sister [REDACTED] came to visit me once. I think [REDACTED] came too [REDACTED]. That was it. I don't remember any inspections either.
77. Sometimes at the weekend, a couple would come round. Most people wanted to adopt a baby but they would walk around anyway. All of the kids would try to make a good impression to get taken. I used to do the hoola hoop. I was good at that. I thought that might impress them but I never got picked.

Religion

78. The nuns gave us an hour of religious studies every day. We had a morning and afternoon session. I think that would have been all the way through. They didn't teach us Latin. It was only the altar boys who got taught Latin.
79. They gave us some PE. It wasn't a big thing. [REDACTED] BAC used to take us to do 'flying angels' and things like that. He was also in charge of the football.
80. One day they had a golf stick and some golf balls for the boys. I remember being there with Francis McColl. [REDACTED] BAC would hit the first ball and whoever caught the ball got to have a shot. I would try to catch it before it landed. I knew that if it landed the other boys would jump on top of me and take it off me. There would a lot of kids who didn't bother to try to catch the ball. They would just be hanging about

when it was being hit. Apparently they told the kids to stand back. McColl didn't and he got hit with the golf club. I think it was one of the other boys. I was standing waiting to catch the ball when he was hit.

81. It was bad supervising. [BAC] should have been looking after us. Francis just got taken away to hospital. A few days later Sister [AGI] told me that he had died. I wouldn't have asked Sister [EAD] what happened. There was no Requiem Mass or anything which is surprising. There was nothing.
82. It happened around my birthday. I remember it was 1961. The reason I remember it was because Francis was one of my best friends. I only had about two or three friends. He was my closest one. He was one of the normal people. The other two friends I had were always being picked on too. I think we were friends because we were outcasts. Francis was normal but he was still my friend. It was an accident. It was a big loss for me.
83. They kept it quiet. The golf didn't happen again. It was just a one off. I heard about it recently on the radio. It sounded like we had been in a luxury golf resort. It wasn't anything like that.

Abuse at Smyllum Park

84. I was regularly beaten by Sister [EAD] at mealtimes. One other time when Sister [EAD] hit me she slapped me across the face. I started laughing hysterically. I wasn't laughing at her but I was laughing and screaming. I think that frightened her a bit because she laid off me for a few weeks. I think she felt that she had gone too far. I remember that incident extremely well. I think I was getting hit so much that it just got to me. I was probably border line cracking up. I was laughing hysterically. I remember thinking that it was wrong. I think it was after so many years of being hit.
85. There was no right in there. It almost didn't seem to matter if you did the best job in the world, they would never say you had done a good job. I didn't learn right from

wrong. The nearest I got to treatment for being hit that time was that she took it easy on me for a few weeks.

86. Sister **AGI** was a saint. She liked all of the kids. I don't recall her ever hitting a kid. I could go to her and talk to her.
87. I picked the potatoes once a year. One time I saw a bag of potatoes falling over. I shouted on some kids to catch it. **BAC** came up and hit me so hard across the head. It affected my hearing for years. It has only been right in the last twenty years. It wasn't the volume it was the clarity. It would be muffled. He hit me so hard. He said that I should have caught the bag but I wasn't near it. I was in secondary school at this point.
88. Most of the time I would miss what the teachers were saying. I would try to sit down the front to hear them. I probably told the teachers that I couldn't hear but I can't remember. I know that hearing was a big problem. There was no investigation into it.
89. I didn't tell anyone about it. I wouldn't even have mentioned it. I would have got into more trouble, if I had told Sister **EAD** then she would have hit me. She would have said "you must have done something". The people who I should have been complaining to were the people doing it.
90. **BAC** was just a vicious man anyway. I ended up in the band. He used to get so angry and hit me. He would fly into a rage. He was trying to teach me a tune called "McNamara's band". I think I was given the trumpet. I couldn't do it. I was clueless about it. He would get so frustrated with me.
91. I don't think he liked me because I wasn't very good at football. I wasn't long out the callipers. My legs were weak and I was very thin. I would have had no power to kick the ball. If you weren't good at football then **BAC** didn't like you.
92. I tried to avoid him. I couldn't on the day with the potatoes. That was the worst. I can still feel my head ringing now from when he hit me. He would grab me and push me.

He would say "go faster" and things like that. He would have a stick and bat me with that if I wasn't keeping up with the band. I wasn't the only kid who didn't like him. He hit me rather than saying "okay you're no good just go". That is what he should have done.

93. There was one time in the football field when this kid stood up to him to try to fight him. He was only a thirteen or fourteen year old kid. They were lining up for a physical fight. All the kids were cheering the boy on. The fight didn't actually happen.
94. He was just a cruel man. I understand that he is even buried with the kids in St Mary's. He got a head stone when he shouldn't have had one. I saw him being violent to others. At the time I was glad it wasn't me. He had a bad temper. He and Sister **EAD** were like brother and sister because they both had the same temper. They would just fly into a temper. At school if you were being hit on the knuckles that was a controlled thing. They didn't fly into a temper.
95. I got extra money for picking the potatoes and turnips. That was the only good thing about doing it. I got to go to Glasgow shopping for the day. I only did it for three years. It was a back breaking job. The potatoes were bad but the turnips were worse. Apparently they are always picked after the first frost. My hands were freezing. I pulled them out of the ground. It was a horrible job.
96. I was glad to get the pocket money and go shopping for the day. I went to Woolworths and bought myself a torch. I don't think that I had it for long. I never held anything for more than a short time.
97. The **██████** brothers were older boys. They were a lot bigger than me. They were the ones who would sexually abuse me and beat me up. There were three of them. They were the makings of a gang. They were big boys and had really deep voices. They would grab me in the cubicle and sexually assault me.
98. I was about ten when it started. They would just grab me and push me into the cubicle. Someone would keep a watch out. There were several of them. I would have

to touch them. I had to put it in my mouth. I remember the smell. I didn't really understand the whole thing. I was quite naïve. It went on until I was about twelve.

99. When it came to toilet time I tried to get in and out first so that I wasn't grabbed by the [REDACTED] I think they just preyed on kids. They were the ring leaders for it. I don't remember any of their first names. The older one had such a deep voice. He looked old enough to have been sixteen or seventeen. He must have been fourteen or fifteen. He was a world apart from me.
100. They ended up getting caught later on when I was there [REDACTED] BAC [REDACTED] gave them a public beating. He called everybody into the gymnasium. It had been going on for years and it had taken that long to be found out. It was very plain. I think that must have been in 1962. They called everybody in. The nuns were there too. We didn't know why we were going there.
101. [REDACTED] BAC [REDACTED] made a speech about it. I can't remember his exact words but I knew what it was for. He was hitting them over the gym equipment called a 'horse'. It was a controlled hit. This was a public punishment. I was older by then.
102. I had heard a bit about who to avoid. I was lucky I wasn't an altar boy and I didn't do the milk run. I didn't have any contact with the priests apart from confession.
103. A couple of kids would take the milk in the morning from the orphanage down to St Mary's church. I was too small for that job. Everybody knew about the milk run. I would hear people talking about it all the time. Nobody would talk to me about it directly because I was an outsider.
104. I didn't tell anyone anything at the time. There was no one to tell. I was really introverted. I didn't ever tell any of my sisters. I was so withdrawn. I would have been too ashamed. I didn't ever tell anyone about the [REDACTED] brothers. There was nothing going to come out of telling anyone. I would have been beat up by them. That's probably why it took so long to find out about it. I think the other kids must have been afraid too. It was happening all the time. I wasn't spoken to by anyone about it.

105. When one of the nuns died we all had to line up and kiss her. I remember how rigid she was. It wasn't a big problem for me but some of the kids were afraid. I didn't really understand what had happened. I was more preoccupied thinking why are they upset? She is going to heaven and that's where they wanted to go. Why aren't they happy for her? I had trouble piecing that together.
106. Sometimes kids would go missing and no one would explain it to me. The [REDACTED] brothers were the only two I remember being brave enough to run away. They got a really good hiding for it. I never saw them again after that.
107. They would threaten us with going to a borstal. I remember one guy came back from one and he said it was better than Smyllum. He was dressed immaculately.
108. The nuns had a special strap for the beatings. It was a big thick strap with two or three prongs on it. It was used for special punishment. It left marks on my hands. It was psychological because I know I was going to the office for it.
109. They would tell me that I was going home at Christmas and then it would be Easter. After a few times, I just gave up asking. I was dying to get out of there. There was nowhere to run away to. It wasn't hard to run away but I had nowhere to go. I was stuck there.

Leaving Smyllum Park

110. I knew that I was getting kicked out when I turned fifteen. I was looking forward to it. I loved school but I thought I would have had to stay in the orphanage. I should have asked questions about further education but I didn't. I wish had fully understood. I had seen other boys leave Smyllum. I left in July 1963. I was fourteen.

Reporting of abuse at Smyllum Park

111. I have never discussed it with anyone. I only mentioned it to my daughter about six years ago. I didn't go into detail then. I never told my ex-wife. I have never reported it to the police.

Life after being in care

112. After I left, I went to stay with my older sister [REDACTED]. I wasn't prepared for it. We had an argument and I left. I took everything personally. I didn't handle it well. I decided to go to London.
113. I walked along the London Road. In those days it was easy to get a lift. I walked nearly as far as Hamilton. When I got near to Hamilton, a big flash Mercedes pulled up. I thought it had stopped for me so I ran up to it with my case. Luckily the man was going to London. He agreed to give me a lift. He was head sales rep and was taking the car to London. I think he must have driven at about 140 mph. I got to London in no time.
114. When I got there I didn't know where to go. I went in for a coffee and it was extortionate. I put my suitcase in St Pancras station. I didn't want anyone to know that I was homeless. I didn't know what to do. It wasn't a good plan.
115. At night time I found Convent Garden. In those days it was an old fruit and vegetable market. I would take fruit. I went to Hyde Park and slept on the deck chairs. Sometimes I would go to the underground and go on the circle line to sleep. It was warm on there.
116. I went to Chinese restaurants and offered to wash the dishes for a meal. I went to Centrepoint in Shaftsbury Avenue. They told me they were full. I was fifteen but I looked twelve. Someone should have known. I slept in Hyde Park for nearly a week.

117. A policeman saw me in Hyde Park. He took me to the police station. They must have taken me in for my own protection. He told me that they wouldn't lock the cell. I was given breakfast in the morning. That was great. They contacted my sister. She sent money down for me to go back. So I went back there and ate humble pie.
118. The same thing happened again. I had another argument with her. I wasn't good in arguments. I slept in railway carriages for three months as I didn't know what else to do. I walked along where they used to keep the railway carriages. I slept there for a few hours every night. I didn't tell my family. I remember it being winter because I had a jacket on and it got covered in red dye from the bench I was sleeping on. It had been raining. That was a bad start.
119. I was too ashamed to say what I was doing. It's like I was outside the rules of normal society. I moved about to a couple of different families. I stayed with [REDACTED] husband for a while.
120. My first job was in Galloway Butchers in Glasgow. I got paid three pounds, seven shillings and six pence. I gave three pounds to [REDACTED] for lodgings. I had moved back in with her. I started at seven o'clock in the morning. I was also going to day release college to be a draftsman.
121. After about six months I stopped doing the draftsman ship. I didn't want to be looking out of the window in an office. I couldn't imagine myself stuck in an office but I actually loved the job. I was between fifteen and sixteen. I changed jobs all the time because I had no direction. In those days people walked into jobs. I didn't know what I wanted to do.
122. When I was seventeen I left Glasgow for Coventry. I moved there with my girlfriend. I ended up doing detention. We had no money so we broke into a shop to get food. We were starving. I was the only one who got caught. It was my first offence. The judge was going to send me back to Glasgow. I had been addicted to gambling on the horses when I was sixteen. I didn't want to go back to Glasgow in case I took it up again. I stopped and have never gambled since.

123. In the end, the judge gave me three months detention because I didn't want to go back to Glasgow. After my detention, the Head Warden asked if I had learned my lesson. I told him it was better than the orphanage. I wasn't getting beaten up every day. I had now had no fear of going to prison which is usually a big deterrent for people. It was more of a moral issue for me whether I committed another offence or not.
124. I fell out with the girlfriend. I started working in the shell garage. I worked there for a while. I lived in Coventry for a year or two.
125. It was hard to focus on doing one thing. In the 1960s the whole world was changing. We thought life was going to be better.
126. I moved back to Glasgow and met my ex-wife when I twenty. We got married. We got a little flat and had our son, [REDACTED]. My life was good as I suddenly had a family. It was my first family.
127. After a couple of years we had a big row. I did what I always do and I walked away. I ended up coming up to visit my ex-wife for a romantic weekend. We were still in the process of splitting up.
128. It was during this trip that she became pregnant with my daughter, [REDACTED]. I didn't know until I came up to visit my son eight years later. My sister [REDACTED] told me that my ex-wife had another child. I asked who the father was and she said that it was me. I hadn't known.
129. I went back to London. I stayed there for about two years. After that I moved to Nottingham for four years. [REDACTED] had moved down there. [REDACTED] had moved there too. I was like a ship without a rudder. It was wherever I landed. I loved living in Nottingham. I had some good times there. I don't even remember why I moved on. I had a bad habit of walking away. My first instinct was to just go if something wasn't working. I think that might have been the effect of the orphanage.

130. In the end I worked at the holiday camps. In 1976 I went to Bognor Regis. After a few weeks they made me the bar manager. I only worked four hours a day. I loved it. I fell in love a few times. I got engaged. They gave us accommodation to live together. It was the best year of my life. It was the summer of 1976.
131. I have lived all over the place. I had a seasonal job in Gleneagles. Once the season finished I came down through Stirling. I had no plans to go anywhere so I went to Dunblane Hydro. I told them I had done wine waiting. They gave me the job. It was fine because most of the time I was just serving cokes and beers. My job was to make it look like the customer had made a special choice when I didn't have a clue. I also learned silver service. The reason I moved doing these types of jobs was to get accommodation.
132. I eventually settled in London. I got a job as a bar man in a big nightclub. They offered me the position of bar manager. This was in the early 80s. I was given £200 per week in my hand. In those days that was good money. They insisted that I live in a flat around the corner. They paid for my accommodation. I had always wanted my own business so I left that job. At the time I was very involved in pool and I was running pool tournaments.
133. I opened my first club in 1985. It was very successful. I ended up with half a dozen clubs. I got robbed of them. I didn't have the right paperwork. I ended up losing everything. I got another club and I got swindled out of it. I was good at running the clubs but I was inexperienced in the legal side of things.
134. I had met with my ex-partner [REDACTED] by then. I was with her from 1985. We were together for about nineteen years. [REDACTED] my son [REDACTED] and I were always moving around. I ran a smaller club in north east London.
135. I became more successful with pool. I started the London Pool Association. I was chairman for years. I was voted chairman of Professional Pool Players for the UK. I did half a dozen refereeing events on the television.

136. I ran the UK pool team who played in the World Championships in Las Vegas. I was team manager. I became the first official referee in the UK for American pool. I carried the flag in the opening ceremony. I have had some successes. I'm retired now. I still help my friends out with things. I'm really good with cameras and converting videos.

Impact

137. The sleeping problem has plagued my life. I had to change my life to fit in with it. It caused a lot of problems with jobs and relationships. I think that is why I ended up running the clubs. I think that when you come out of a place like that you have your own set of rules.

138. It has had an effect on my ability to maintain relationships. I was amazed that [REDACTED] stayed with me for so long. There were several times that I nearly walked away. If she hadn't been sensible we wouldn't have stayed together as long as we did. I always moved on. I think it is a result of being in Smyllum. If things weren't working I just left. I didn't even acknowledge a problem. It didn't give me a rudder in life. I just wandered.

139. I still have trouble going to bed. Most of the time I stay up all night. I ended up taking jobs that required me to work at night. Ironically it turned out to be good thing in older age because I'm not working now. I can just sit on my laptop and watch TV. In the past it was always a problem. I lived with my former partner for nineteen years and we never went to bed at the same time.

140. I went to a hypnotist. It helped a little bit at the beginning but it went back to normal afterwards. I saw this top hypnotherapist. She told me after our session that I was better just watching the TV. She wouldn't tell me what had happened. I must have reacted badly. I paid extra money for her. It wasn't through the National Health Service. It has been a big, big problem all of my life. I have to have two or three alarm clocks. I sleep right through them. I just don't hear them.

141. I have a very good relationship with both of my children. I have fantastic relationship now with my son. I mean considering I was a terrible dad and I wasn't always there. I see my son regularly. I have a lot in common with him. I talk to my daughter on the phone a lot.
142. I talk more openly to my daughter than to anyone else. There is nobody else who I could think of telling. I feel that, in some ways, my family had it worse than me. I felt like I didn't have the right to complain about Smyllum. I had just accepted that that was life then. [REDACTED] I never spoke to [REDACTED] about my time there. He became an alcoholic before he died.

Records

143. I have never made any attempts to recover my records. I have no photographs of myself before I was eighteen. I didn't keep in touch with anyone. I have always moved about and I changed my name.

Other information

144. I think that children have to have someone that they can confide in and trust. There was nobody to tell back then. It was a closed environment. I think we just thought that it was normal but it was an oppressed system.
145. The only hope I have is that by telling what I remember that I can clarify that there is truth to it. I'm very clear in my mind about the things that happened. I want to help others by coming forward but I never felt the need to release it for myself. I also wanted my daughter to understand why I had screwed up her life.

146. I don't believe in religion anymore. I sometimes wish there was a God to deal with Sister **EAD** She would have to go in front of God to explain what she had done.

147. 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..... 3RD JANUARY 2018