

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Thomas WILSON

Support person present: No

1. My name is Thomas Stewart Wilson. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1954. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Buckhaven, Fife and originally stayed with my mother, [REDACTED], and my father [REDACTED] in a council house in Leven in Fife. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] when mum and dad separated, but dad stayed as a lodger in the house for a few years..
3. My dad rarely worked but when he did, he had jobs with coal, in a brick works, Merchant Navy and some other labouring jobs. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. Later in my life, when I was in the custody system, mum and dad split up and she moved in with [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
4. I was too young to have any memories of my time with my own family but from my records I was placed into care when I was ten months old. I saw from those same records it was stated that some of the reasons for me going into care was a result of neglect from my parents.


Greenbank Children's Home, Leven

5. My time in Greenbank was from when I was about ten months old until I was about four. It was not a constant time there as I returned to the family home where I would spend a few months, maybe as much as a year, until things went wrong again and then when I was about two years old, I would be back into Greenbank.

Routine at Greenbank Children's Home, Leven

6.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later


7. Again, I was too young when I was at Greenbank and have no memories of my time there. The dates and movements involving Greenbank are mostly from my records. I was back at my family home when I was moved to my next placement. At that time, we had moved house and were now living in Wemyss at that time.

St Margaret's Children's Home, Elie, Fife

8. I was four years old when a social worker called at the family house and picked me up to take me to St Margaret's. I do remember that I did not want to leave the family home and the social work had to grab me by the arm to put me into the car.

9.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



10.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

16.

17.

18.

19.

20.

21.

22.

23.

24.

25.

26.

27.

28.

29.

30.

31.

32.

33.

34.

35.

36.

37.

38.

39.

40.

41.

42.

43.

44.

45.

46.

47.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

48.

49.

Leaving St Margaret's Children's Home, Elie, Fife

50.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

51.

52. After the Panel had read the social work reports on me it was decided that I should be sent to Dale School in Arbroath. This was an Approved School. I was never told how long I would spend there.

Dale School, Arbroath

53.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

54.

55.

56.

57.

58.

59.

60.

61.

62.

63.

64.

65.

66.

67.

68.

69.

70.

71.

72.

73.

74.

75.

76.

77.

78.

79.

80.

81.

82.

83.

84.

85.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

86.

87.

88.

89.

90.

91.

92.

93.

94. I was about thirteen when I left Dale School and went home to stay with mum. Dale School also arranged with the social work department that I had to see them every couple of weeks. It was like being on licence or probation. Miss Henderson, my social worker, told me that I had to behave, or I could end up being put back into Dale School or maybe somewhere else.

95. I was only home for three or four weeks before I got myself into trouble again. Mum was at the Panel along with social workers. The Panel were discussing the things I had done wrong. They were then given the social work reports and they told me I was

being sent to Rossie Farm, Montrose. I went straight to Rossie Farm from the Panel and was taken there by the social worker

Rossie Farm School, Montrose

96. I think Rossie Farm was privately run. I think when I was sent there it was a Mr LLY who was SNR. there were different staff for schoolwork, joinery and gardening. I can't remember the names of the other staff.

Routine at Rossie Farm School, Montrose

First day

97. When I first arrived, I saw that it was a really long white coloured building and it was on two levels. It was all boys there and I think there were probably eighty boys there, who were aged between thirteen and sixteen. I was not told how long I was to be there for. The lower level was mainly the offices, dining areas and leisure area. On the upper floor were where the dormitories were, along with the toilet and washing facilities.
98. It was all boys at Rossie Farm and they were aged between thirteen to sixteen. I was not told how long I was to be there for. I was very apprehensive when I went there as I had heard about the place before from others who had been there.

Mornings and bedtime

99. It was the usual routine for the day. We were woken by staff, washed, and dressed and down for breakfast. We would then get ready for any classes, but I don't remember there being much of that.

Mealtimes/Food

100. I never had any issues with the food when I was there. There was plenty to choose from and I don't remember being hungry.

Leisure time

101. On the Saturdays I was allowed to go down to Montrose where I was able to spend the pocket money we were given. From the time I was in the home I was allowed to smoke, but only after my mum had given written permission.

School

102. When I first went into the home there were some classes we had to go to within the home. I don't remember much about them. Once I was fourteen that stopped, and we moved onto doing jobs within the home.

Work

103. When you reached the age of fourteen you were tasked with carrying out some chores in the home. The first one I did was topping the carrots from the fields or you might be asked to pick potatoes. You did get some pay, but I don't remember it being very much.

Family contact

104. Mum did visit me at Rossie Farm on a couple of occasions, but there were no visits from the social work. There was no home leave when I was there.

Discipline

105. There were no beatings or kicking's from any of the staff. They did use corporal punishment, but it was usually ^{SNR} [REDACTED], Mr ^{LLY} [REDACTED] who administered the punishments. This was usually the belt given on the hands. I did not like it on my hands

and preferred it be given on my legs. I think I was given five or six strokes of the belt on maybe three or four occasions, maybe for fighting with other boys there. I did have marks on my legs but preferred that to having the belt over the hand.

Bed Wetting

106. Because the atmosphere with the staff at Rossie Farm was much better all the issues I had with bed wetting went away.

Abuse at Rossie Farm School, Montrose

107. There was bullying but that was from older boys taking it out on the younger ones.
108. There was an older boy called [REDACTED] who would try and get me on my own and told me he wanted to touch me. He cut a hole on my trouser pockets so he could get his hand on my penis. This became a regular thing with him. It was never him asking me to touch him.
109. He did this to me about a dozen times. There were times [REDACTED] would follow me when I was on the football pitch, and he would take me behind some of the trees. I was still about thirteen when this was happening and [REDACTED] was about fifteen.

Reporting of abuse at Rossie Farm School, Montrose

110. I was always afraid to report any of the abuse. If anyone found out that you were reporting, you were classed as a grass and that would get you in more trouble with the residents.

Leaving Rossie Farm School, Montrose

111. It was about a month before I actually left Rossie Farm, that I was told I was being allowed to leave and go home. I was told that I was getting to go home because I had been behaving myself.
112. When I did get home, it was much the same with reporting in. I had to report to the social work offices every couple of weeks, just like I did after Dale School.
113. I think I was home about six weeks before I started getting into trouble again. I was soon back in front of another Panel, but I don't think mum was there that time.

Unknown remand home, Edinburgh

114. I think I might have spent a couple of weeks in the remand home in Edinburgh, but I can't remember the name. I had been on something like a police bail and got into bother again while I was out and was sent to the remand home. I was to stay there until a place could be found for me to go to.

Routine at Unknown remand home, Edinburgh

First day

115. It was the social work department that took me to the remand home in their car. It was only when I was in the car that someone told me where I was going. I can remember it was only about a mile from the shopping area. Although I only spent a couple of weeks there, I was never told how long I was to spend there. I would have been about fourteen when I went there.

116. When I went to the home, I found it was all boys there. I think they were aged between thirteen and seventeen and there were anywhere between eighty and a hundred boys there. I don't know what organisation ran the home.

Discipline

117. Again, there were no beatings when I was in this home, but the strap was still being used as a punishment. By this time, I had buckled down and never got the belt. There was some bullying from the older boys but nothing from the staff.

Leaving Unknown remand home, Edinburgh

118. After being in that home for the two or three weeks I was sent back to the panel. After this hearing I was sent to Oakbank Residential School in Aberdeen. It is about a mile outside of the main shopping area at Union Street. I was still about fourteen when I went there,

Oakbank Residential School, Aberdeen

119. When I arrived at Oakbank I soon found out that most of the boys were from the Dundee area.
120. There was a perimeter wall but it was only about 2 feet in height. I was in Oakbank on two separate occasions. I don't know what organisation ran the home.

Routine at Oakbank Residential School, Aberdeen

121. When I stayed there the first time, I was in a large dormitory with another forty to fifty boys. They were between thirteen and seventeen years old. We slept on metal beds and there were metal lockers between each of the bed areas. It was just like a hospital

ward with the row of beds on both sides of the large room. The second time I went to Oakbank I was housed in a new built block and I had a room to myself.

School

122. At Oakbank there were two classrooms in the main building and a science room at the back of the main building.

Running away

123. I never even thought about running away from there as the staff were much more relaxed.

Discipline

124. You might have some fights in the home with the other boys as there were lots of falling out, dependant on what part of the country you were from. If you were caught fighting you might get a punishment.
125. There was a punishment system in place in which you were given "hours" for anything you had been doing wrong. There was a record card kept within a box in the office of the reasons for being punished and how many hours had been allocated. If you were being particularly bad and had gathered perhaps twelve to fourteen hours punishment then the next level, was you were not allowed to go into Aberdeen town centre at the weekend.
126. They still had corporal punishment there and they used the belt. I had managed to get myself in order and was not getting into trouble, so I never got the belt while I was at Oakbank. I had been through the system and was aware that if I behave myself there was a chance of getting out of there much quicker.
127. Once more I think there was no abuse from the staff and the atmosphere was much better so that made my time there much easier.

Abuse at Oakbank Residential School, Aberdeen

128. There were older pupils there that sexually abused me while I stayed there. One of the boys was a lad called [REDACTED] who was an older boy, maybe about seventeen. To avoid being seen by the night watchman, [REDACTED] would crawl under the beds in the dorm and climb into my bed. He would rub his penis between my legs until he had finished.
129. There was an area behind the boiler house where you could not be seen by anyone. This was where a boy called either [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] made me masturbate him. I can't remember how old he was, but probably a similar age to [REDACTED] seventeen.
130. There was another older boy, who was known as '[REDACTED]' who was about the same age as the others, and he too would make me masturbate him. He also tried to make me perform oral sex on him, but I was able to stop him doing that.
131. I was not the only boy this was happening to as these three were abusing many of the other younger boys in the home.
132. All the abuse I mentioned took place the first time I was in the home. The second time I was there I was not abused by anyone, staff, or pupils. I was only there for three or four weeks. I was then sent on a train to the court. I was told I was being given a good report and would return there. It turned out they gave me a bad report and as a result I was sent to borstal.
133. There was another boy who I thought was a friend, who abused me, but he was younger, nearer my own age. His name was [REDACTED], and he was from the Dundee area. He made me masturbate him.

Reporting of abuse at Oakbank Residential School, Aberdeen

134. I don't think any of the staff were aware of the sexual abuse that was taking place. I know I didn't tell anyone. If you thought about telling anyone while you stayed in those places, then the others would treat you as a grass. Your time in care would then be hellish.

Leaving Oakbank Residential School, Aberdeen

135. The first time I was there I think I spent about a year in Oakbank. Before being released after that first time at Oakbank I was given a new suit and a new pair of shoes. I was then back home, and I think I was only out of there for a few months before I was back in trouble. I was subject of a recall order and back to court. After reading the reports they decided I was to go back to Oakbank.
136. The final time I was released from Oakbank I was once more back with mum. I was only out for a short time before I was back in trouble. I was between sixteen and eighteen and after being at court the Sheriff decided I should be sent to Polmont Borstal. The reason I thought I was nearly eighteen is because I thought that was the legal age you had to have been before being sent to those places. I don't have any records from my time at Polmont.

Polmont Borstal

137. My time at Polmont Borstal was to be an assessment period for eight weeks. At the end of this assessment period, they would decide where I would spend the remainder of any sentence.

Routine at Polmont Borstal

138. Wherever we were moving around within Polmont Borstal we were made to march at double time. Every morning we were made to run a mile in the yard. This was to be done before we had our breakfast. We were made to wear our shorts, t-shirt, and our training shoes. It did not matter what the weather was, it was the same outfit.
139. After our breakfast we stayed in our cells for most of the remainder of the day.

Mealtimes/Food

140. Our breakfast and all the other meals were eaten in our cells. After being in the exercise yard we had to collect our meal from the food hall and take it back to our cells. In the evening we might have been given a cup of tea and a bun in our cells. You probably spent a minimum of twelve hours a day in your cell.

Clothing/uniform

141. The staff at Polmont wore their own civilian clothes. All the inmates wore a borstal type uniform, but I cannot recall the colours.

Leisure time

142. There was an hour of recreation in the evening where we would have access to a snooker table, pool table and table tennis. If we did not like that there was a television which we could all watch.

Education

143. There was no education carried out while I was in Polmont, and you were not allowed anything in the cells.

Healthcare

144. I did manage to see the prison psychologist twice when I was in Polmont. I would tell him that the issues I was having was due to the abuse I was suffering from the staff. I presume he just ignored it because nothing ever happened.

Work

145. There were no chores to be carried out and no education while I was there.

Family contact

146. I did not get any visits from my mum, other family, or any social workers while I was in Polmont.

Abuse at Polmont Borstal

147. Mr^{HWN} [REDACTED] was one of the staff there. He told us we had to call him "Sir" whenever we addressed him. If he saw us moving around the place and we were not marching in time he would hit you over the head with a stick he carried. I was not the only one he did this to, as many of the other inmates were treated the same. If he did not use the stick, he would just use his hands. He beat me on maybe twelve different times while I was there, for anything he decided I was doing wrong.
148. I never hit any of the officers, but I was aware and saw others who did. They would then be beaten in their cells by a group of officers. Most of the officers were ex-military and knew how to hurt you without marking you.
149. The staff were continually beating us to keep us in our place. After about three weeks of this I could not take it anymore. I used the [REDACTED] in an effort to hang myself. An officer came into the cell and found me. I was cut down and put in front of the governor. He decided he would just give me a row and send me back to my cell. I

tried to tell him that it was because of the abuse I was suffering from the staff. He ignored this and just sent me back to the hall. I know that there have been many suicides in Polmont and most of them are due to the abuse handed out by the officers. Other than Mr ^{HWN} I can't remember any of the other names.

150. If any of the inmates raised their hands to one of the staff he would get a visit in his cell from about six officers and they would give him a beating.

Leaving Polmont Borstal

151. At the end of my assessment period at Polmont it was decided that I would spend the remaining eight months of my sentence at Noranside Borstal in Forfar. The eight months along with the assessment period were part of a two-year sentence I was to serve. I had behaved during my time so was allowed out on good behaviour.

Noranside Borstal

First day

152. I was in a cell on my own. The cell I had gave me a view of the outside and that helped make things a bit easier while I was there.

Clothing/uniform

153. We all wore a brown coloured uniform, and the staff wore their civilian clothes.

Work

154. When I was at Noranside Borstal I was part of a working party and one of the things I did was to work on a farm. Part of the role on the farm I was to ensure the cattle and sheep were fed. The staff who supervised us on the farm were very pleasant.

155. When the older boy on that detail moved on, I was allowed to be the tractor boy. While I was allowed to drive the tractor, I had to plough the fields.
156. We all got a wage for doing those chores and as long as we had behaved, we were allowed to go into town on the Saturday to spend our money. We could also buy some items from the prison shop like sweets, soap, or shampoo etc.

Running away

157. It was good for me with the change in atmosphere as that meant that I never thought about running away.

Discipline

158. I had dreaded going to Noranside but because there was no army style atmosphere and no beatings, I ended up enjoying most of my time there.

Abuse at Noranside Borstal

159. There was no abuse from either the staff or other inmates while I was in Noranside.

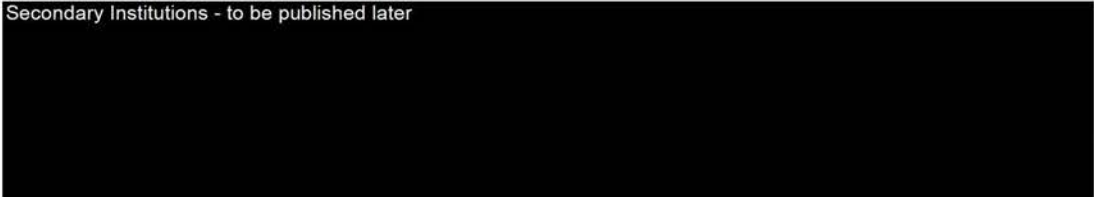
Leaving Noranside Borstal

160. When my sentence was completed, I was released and went back to stay with mum. I think I lasted a couple of months before I was back to being in trouble again.
161. My next time I was in prison was Friarton YOI in Perth where I was sentenced to six months and only served four for good behaviour. After that I spent different short spells in the prison system and was held in a variety of prisons in Scotland.

162. Around 1974 I moved down south to the Ashington area but again I was getting into trouble. I was sentenced to sixteen months but also had some outstanding charges from my time back home. I was brought back to Scotland for those outstanding matters and spent the remainder of my sentence along with another fifteen months for the outstanding matters in Scotland.


Life after being in care


163. Secondary Institutions - to be published later



164. I can remember when I was about 26 or 27 and I was in prison at that time. I had told my family not to write to me. I was still feeling lonely and one day I decided I would

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



165. I met my first wife, and we got married while I was in prison. When I was released from jail, I found she had been  and I had the marriage dissolved.

166. Around 1990 I moved to live in the Newcastle area. I got married again around 1992 but she ended up giving me a choice of the marriage or drink. I chose drink but when I got off it, I was able to go back to her. That was three years ago, and I have not touched a drink since.

167. I did work during my times out of the prison system, first as a van boy then in a Fishmongers and I have done many labouring jobs. I even started my own pallet business. When I was out of trouble I always managed to keep working until I was about sixty years old.

Impact

168. I recall advice from a psychiatrist when I spent a short time in Peterhead. He told me that I would be better off if I stayed away from my family and live on my own. When I was in Saughton prison I can recall I had [REDACTED] and ended up in hospital for five days. Again, I saw a psychiatrist and he too said I should go and live on my own as it would be better for me.

169. I blame my parents more for a lack of education. There was no encouragement from them to learn because they were addicted to alcohol and neither of them were working. They would even keep [REDACTED] off school when it suited them. When I was actually at the schools, I enjoyed my time there and would take things in but with all the interruptions, being moved from home to home it affected me badly.

170. As a result of my time in care I have had issues with alcohol and drug addiction. My psychiatric issues are also as a result of the abuse I received during my time in care [REDACTED] as well as my parental upbringing. My last time I spent in hospital was for a two-week period and that was to do with my alcohol problems. I think my issues with alcohol began when I was around sixteen or seventeen. I used it to get rid of the memories of my time in care. Most of the crimes I committed were to fund my drinking.

171. I had been prescribed Diconol for pain relief and that was one of the tablets I became addicted to. I was on this drug for thirty years. I have been off those tablets for the last four or five years.

172. From the age of ten years old I have been prescribed medication for my depression. It only stopped when I was in prison and as soon as I was back out my doctor re-issued the prescription and I still take them to this day.

173. I am still having nightmares from the abuse I suffered at **Secondary Institutions -** Polmont Borstal. To this day I still see a psychiatrist to help dealing with those issues.

174. If I was not being abused while I was in care, I would have had a much better life. I would have been able to learn more and would not have resorted to committing crime. I could have done something with my life.

175.



I was not at my mother's funeral, but I did make it to my dad's. I have nothing to do with any of the remaining family.

Reporting of Abuse

176.



177.



Secondary Institutions - to be published later

178. About a year ago I took Fife Council to court after I had been given advice from the police about taking a civil action. I contacted my solicitor, and he took on the case against the council. He also helped me get my social work records. I spent three days in the witness box. The council eventually tried to get me to accept £80,000 - £100,000 but I settled for £150,000. I have since wrote a book about my time in care, called Tears of Bedtime, which was published in 2007.
179. I have never given a statement about any of the other abuse. I have been able to talk more about my abuse while giving my statement to the Inquiry.

Records

180. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

181.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

It was decided by the medical authorities that I should be sent to Ovenstone Residential School in Pittenweem. I stayed there between 23 September 1959, when I was five years old, until 31 August 1960. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

then I was returned to St Margaret's. Although I have read about it, I don't have many memories of being at Ovenstone.

182. Again, in the records, between 1 March 1961 and 22 November 1961 my mother had taken me to see a child psychologist at Barrie Street Clinic, where I saw a Dr Haldane for, I think six different appointments. He carried out an IQ test, Terman-Merrill, which again showed I had an IQ of 81.

183. Some of the report forms for going into Dale School show that they said I had no mental health issues but with an IQ of only 81 they were fully aware of me being backward in comparison to other children. That should have prevented me from being admitted to Dale School.

Lessons to be learned

184. None of the places I was ever in gave me any help or advice about going back into the real world.

185. The places I was abused in as a child should not have had a licence to be involved in the care of children. Only if the social work have more direct involvement should a place be given a licence.

Other information

186. I would like to see that all the homes today are run by the social work and supervised by them. There should not be any private contractor allowed to run homes caring for children. I think there should be more emphasis of homes employing more women as I found that most of the women I had during my time in care were much more understanding and showed more care to the children.

187. 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..... 31/01/2023