

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GWJ

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is GWJ though I am more commonly called GWJ or GWJ. My date of birth is 1950. My details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in near Livingston and stayed there till I was five or six when we moved to Edinburgh. My father was called and my mother was called. My dad died at the age of 52 while my mum died when she was 68.
3. My sister was the oldest and she has since died. I was next then it was my brothers and. has also since died. My dad and his brother had a business whereby they would collect clothes for the dry cleaning industry which was quite new to Britain at the time.
4. We stayed in and life at home was good until my dad left when I was nine. He was a good piano player who used to play in all the pubs and I think he met another woman through doing that.
5. After my dad left, my mum struggled financially and me and my brother would scavenge for lemonade bottles for the deposit return money you could get for them.
6. I started getting into a wee bit of trouble fighting with others. In of 1962, not long before I turned twelve, I was part of a crowd throwing stones and we smashed some

windows, though we hadn't actually been aiming at them. Some painters working nearby chased us and I was the only one caught.

7. The police got involved and despite the fact that my mother paid for the broken windows, I was charged and taken to a Burgh Court. My mother was there when I appeared in front of the bench.
8. I went to Gilmartin holding centre where I was held for a couple of weeks before going back to court where they told me I was a bad influence to my brothers and too much for my mum to handle. They said I was going to be sent to an approved school. There were four people on the bench at the hearing and I assume they were councillors.
9. I was returned to Gilmartin holding centre for about four days before I was taken in a car to St Joseph's Tranent when a space became available for me. If they had simply let me out after I had been in Gilmartin I doubt I would ever have been in trouble again. It wasn't a bad place but the lack of freedom was dreadful.
10. Prior to me appearing in front of the Burgh Court there had never been any social work involved in our family, or whatever the equivalent was in those days.

St Joseph's, Tranent

11. I don't recall who drove me to St Joseph's but when I got there I was taken to Brother PAF's room. He was SNR. After that I was taken to a place where my clothes were taken off me and put on a rack downstairs and I was given a school uniform.
12. St Joseph's was an all-boys place, all aged between ten and fifteen, and we were split into four separate houses called St Andrew's, St Patrick's, De La Salle and St Joseph's. Each house wore a different coloured uniform and those in St Joseph's wore maroon. I was put into this house so that was the colour of my uniform.

13. I was allocated the number [REDACTED] which was the number that had to be sewed into each item of our clothing so as we could identify what belonged to who. After I got my uniform I was taken to the dorm that I was to be in. It was near tea-time and a boy called [REDACTED], a big lump of a boy, was told to show me where everything was. I was terrified and didn't know what was happening.
14. St Joseph's School was a big U-shaped building with a big yard in the middle. It had three levels and there were two dorms on the top floor and another two on the middle floor. When you entered the front door there was a corridor that ran the full length of the building.
15. Brother PAF's office was on the left as you went through the front door then you had various admin offices. Above the offices were rooms where staff slept. Each of the houses that the boys were allocated to had a dorm and each dorm held about thirty boys.
16. My dorm, St Joseph's, and St Patrick's were on the top floor and I recall that St Andrew's and De La Salle were on the first floor. There was also another smaller dorm on the first floor called the "wet room" which had six or eight mattresses with rubber sheets therein and this was where boys who wet the bed slept.
17. On the ground floor there was also a canteen, a kitchen, an assembly hall and a changing room which was where you changed out of your uniform if you were going home for the weekend and you would be given a suit and shirt and tie. There were also big playing fields in the grounds.
18. As well as SNR [REDACTED] Brother PAF [REDACTED], other Brothers I recall were Brother PAG [REDACTED], Brother LUU [REDACTED], Brother GWM [REDACTED] and Brother Andrew who was one of the best Brothers. They were all of the De La Salle Order and wore black habits. There were also outside staff who came in.
19. Brother PAF [REDACTED] was maybe in his fifties, quite chubby with grey hair and an English accent. Brother PAG [REDACTED] was a nightmare in that he would batter you then give you a

sweet after it. It was very confusing. He was also about fifty, tall and thin. Brother LUJ was forty or fifty and had a broad Irish accent. Brother GWM was the sports master and was quite young, maybe thirty with red hair and an English accent. Brother Andrew was in his late twenties or early thirties.

Routine at St Joseph's Tranent

20. We were woken by a bell at 7:30 am then you would go and get washed, brush your teeth and get dressed. Then you could go to mass if you wanted to. After about six months I became an altar boy which meant I got up at 6:30 am. The advantage of this was you got to have breakfast when nobody else was about. In the normal routine you made your bed before going for breakfast.
21. After breakfast you had half an hour free time then school started at 9:00 am. Before lunch you had a quick wash and after lunch you went back to school till 3:30 pm. You then had leisure time until tea at 5:00 pm. At bed time we went to the dorms about an hour before we had to go to sleep and we would spend that time reading.
22. We went home most weekends but if you didn't there was a lot of sports activities that we would do like football and cricket.

Mealtimes / Food

23. The food was alright, especially the sticky-toffee pudding. There was no problem if you didn't like something but you were always encouraged to only take what you would eat. They didn't like boys overloading their plates then leaving half of it. They didn't like food to be wasted.

Washing / bathing

24. Wash basins were on the ground floor with showers. There were four rows of six showers. They were individual cubicles but didn't have doors. You didn't control the water and you would sometimes be told to stay in the shower while they turned it cold. This was done as a punishment and happened to me four or five times.

Chores

25. We cleaned a lot especially on a Sunday when we would get out the big buffers and polish the floors. This was also the case if visitors were coming and we had to make sure the place was spick and span.

Clothing / uniform

26. The school supplied us all with uniforms and sports clothes but you wore your own clothes when you went home at the weekend. You got clean clothes every week and you would put your dirty washing in a laundry basket at the end of the dorm.

School

27. As well as normal classes we also did things like tailoring, carpentry and working as blacksmiths. When we were doing the tailoring it sometimes felt that we were being used as slaves as what we were doing was sewing the vestments for priests and stitching crosses on to the back of the vestments which the school then sold.
28. Brother **PAG** taught English and music. The Brothers tended to teach the normal school subjects while outside staff tended to teach the work classes.

Trips / Holidays

29. Every summer we went berry-picking in Blairgowrie. We would stay in huts, each of which had twenty beds. We would do it for six weeks allegedly getting 3p a punnet. However, we never saw even half of what we earned. In the autumn we did potato picking in Tranent and, again, didn't see half the money we earned.

Birthdays and Christmas

30. I was always home for Christmas but prior to going home decorations were put up in the dining-room and a tree was put up in the chapel. I have no recollection of any birthdays being celebrated.

Visits / Inspections/ Review of Detention

31. We didn't get visitors often as we went home at the weekend once you had proved trustworthy to do so. My mum came to see me on open days when I was playing in the pipe band. My brother [REDACTED] also wanted to visit but my mum said that the school wouldn't allow him to come. My mum was the only visitor I ever got. Certainly no social worker or anything like that visited me.

Healthcare

32. There was a matron who was also in charge of the ladies who worked in the canteen. I don't recall her name. I don't think I ever had to go and see her except for the times that we all got checked for head-lice. I don't recall ever having problems with my teeth or having to see a dentist.

Religion

33. We said prayers every morning in the classroom. On Saturdays and Sundays, when we weren't at home, we said prayers at assembly in the morning. In the evening, after your shower and just before you went to bed, you also said prayers in the assembly hall. We also got taught religion in class, mainly from Brother Andrew who was a good teacher.

Running away

34. I was thirteen or fourteen when I decided to run away with another boy called [REDACTED]. We jumped over the wall but landed beside two gardeners and were taken to Brother PAF [REDACTED] office and then into a dorm adjacent to the office. He told us to strip off down to our underpants and to bend over the bed.
35. Brother LUU [REDACTED] and Brother PAG [REDACTED] were also present. [REDACTED] was present when Brother PAF [REDACTED] gave me three or four hits of the belt on my buttocks but I then left the room and didn't actually see [REDACTED] get the belt though I know he did as I saw him after it. The belt was incredibly painful and I never tried to abscond again.

Bed Wetting

36. The small dorm called the wet-room was where you got sent to sleep for a week if you wet the bed. One of the brothers checked your bed every morning if it was likely that you had wet the bed. The smell in the room was revolting. I remember there were two twins from Glasgow that were in there regularly.
37. Brother LUU [REDACTED] sent me there once as a punishment when he caught me listening to my radio. He was just being vindictive as I hadn't actually wet my bed.
38. If you were in the wet-room a brother would be watching over you during the night. The boys in the wet-room were sent for a shower in the morning if they had wet their bed. Cleaners would collect the wet sheets and take them to the laundry. There was no physical punishment for those who wet the bed.

Discipline

39. The boy who showed me around when I first arrived had told me that I should simply do as I was told. If you misbehaved in class you got sent to Brother PAF [REDACTED] with a note. He would perhaps stop you playing football for a week or stop you having recreation time. I only got belted the once when I absconded. I know others got the belt but I wasn't present. It was always Brother PAF [REDACTED] who administered the belt.

Abuse at St Joseph's, Tranent

40. Brother **LUU** used to pull your hair. He would call you out of the line and grab the hair at the side of your head, lift you up, then smack your ears. It was agony and he did this to me several times and he did it regularly to others. He used to also hit me and others regularly on the head with his knuckles. That was painful. The older boys used to tell us to stay away from him.
41. There was one time when I had been playing football and on the way back to the changing room I spat on the courtyard. Brother **LUU** saw me do this and called me over to the store-room. There he gave me a toothbrush and a tin of tooth powder. He took me back into the courtyard and told me I would have to clean the whole courtyard using just the toothbrush and powder.
42. I was to do this every day during my recreation time, after school and before tea, which was between 3:30 pm and 5:00 pm. Every day he would mark off what I had done with a piece of yellow chalk and where he had marked was where I would start the next day. At the end of each day I also had to wash away the marks left by the tooth powder.
43. I was able to clean an area of about two square feet every day and the courtyard was roughly the size of half a football park. It took me almost a year and I probably went through about two hundred toothbrushes. I was just over twelve years old when I started doing it and it was agony on my knees.
44. I had to do this regardless of the weather. Hail, rain or shine I just had to get on with it. It was particularly bad doing it in the winter when I would first have to wipe away the snow then clear the ice before I could even start. The only time I got any reprieve from it was when Brother **LUU** went on a two week break to Ireland. I told my mother about it when I went home but she said there was nothing she could do about it.
45. Brother **PAG** had a habit of slapping you on the face once or twice if you had carried on in class but the strange was that he always gave you a sweet after he had done it

and said sorry. He did this to me once when I was thirteen. I can't say for sure if he did it to others.

46. Another time, after playing cricket, I was getting a drink out of the water fountain which we weren't supposed to do. The next thing I knew Brother **GWM** booted me as hard as he could up my backside. I nearly swallowed the tap and it felt as if I had cracked a tooth though luckily I didn't. That was the only time he was vicious to me.

Leaving St Joseph's, Tranent

47. I was in St Josephs between 1963 and 1965. Two weeks before I left I got told by Brother **PAF** that the next time I went home it would be for good. I remember as I was leaving I was expecting about £26 for all the berry picking I had done but was only given £2-10s. I was too scared to complain in case they changed their mind about allowing me to leave.

Life after being in care

48. I was delighted to be back home. It was a great feeling to go out and simply go for a walk without anybody shouting "**GWI**". My dad appeared back on the scene and gave me two choices. I was either to be an apprentice mechanic or join the army so I decided to become an apprentice. I didn't want to go into the army as it would have been like going back to another institution.
49. Amongst other things I later worked for **[REDACTED]** and moved to Shetland in 1977. I have been married since 1966 and we have one son. I have spent most of my working life as a mechanic and retired when I was 58. I was diagnosed with diabetes about twenty year ago. Three year ago I had the **[REDACTED]**
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

Impact

50. My time in St Joseph's is rarely out of my mind and I probably think about it two or three times a week. I went back about a year ago to show my son but I just felt numb being there. The memories were horrible, especially the memory of a pair of twins from Glasgow sitting cowering and crying in a corner.
51. I wouldn't say that it has affected my thoughts on religion as, when I look back on it the cruelty that went on in St Joseph's was simply an example of man's inhumanity to man. I have never suffered from depression. I do feel low sometimes but that's really to do with health issues.

Reporting of Abuse

52. I spoke to the police in Lerwick, Shetland, about a year ago about what happened to me in St Joseph's. A policewoman came to my house and took a statement and I later received a letter from the Procurator Fiscal's Office in Edinburgh saying that Michael John Murphy had been sentenced to seven years. I believe he may be Brother LUU [REDACTED] and I'm lead to believe there may be other charges pending against him. I don't know if these charges concern what happened to me.

Records

53. I have never sought my records and am not sure I would know how to go about it. I know the De La Salle Brothers have their headquarters in England somewhere. However, I doubt if they kept records that speak of me being battered or having to spend a year cleaning the courtyard with a toothbrush.

Lessons to be Learned

- 54. There should be better supervision of those who are looking after children. There should be some authority to bring them to heel when things go wrong. Not everybody who has looked after children are bad but there are always those who slip through the net.

- 55. 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. GWI

Dated. *15 AUGUST 2019*