

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HGA

Support person present: Yes.

1. My full name is HGA [REDACTED]. I have always been known by that name. My date of birth is [REDACTED]/1954. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born and brought up in Charleston, Dundee. My dad was [REDACTED] and my mum was [REDACTED]. My dad worked in the shipyard as a ship builder for most of his life but when he was in his fifties he got really ill. My mum started drinking then and things started to become really hectic in the household with everyone having to fend for themselves.
3. I had five siblings so there was six of us with mum and dad in the household. The oldest was [REDACTED] who was three years older than me, then [REDACTED] who was two years older, then it was me, and then there was [REDACTED] who was a year younger than me, [REDACTED] who was two or three years younger and [REDACTED] who was about seven years younger.
4. We were basically always poor and never had any money, the food situation was bad and we got used to having less than most people. We would go to school dirty wearing torn clothes and we were a sort of pariah in that sense.

5. When we were young and growing up my mother never drank at all, she was brilliant and we were happy, then for whatever reason she started drinking. The children never found out the reason she started drinking. It then just got out of control.
6. I went to St. Clements Primary School which was in Charleston in Dundee. I remember we had a nun called Sister [REDACTED] who taught us at St. Clements who used to wear a knuckle duster on her hand. I was about eight or nine when she taught our class and she used to wear it and hit children with it. She didn't hit me but I saw her hit other kids, she was very handy with her hands. She didn't use great force but it was enough to hurt the children.
7. As time went on me and my older brother [REDACTED] started stealing purses in the town. I was about eleven and he was about thirteen. We were stealing to get money to help the family so they could buy soup or bread so they didn't go hungry. We did get caught though and found guilty for the stealing and as a result of that we were both sent to approved schools.
8. I went to a juvenile court in Dundee in 1965. I was with [REDACTED] and there was a judge and everything but I've no recollection of what was said or anything like that. It was all done and dusted on my behalf, I didn't get asked about anything and I don't think I had a lawyer or a social worker. I don't remember seeing a social worker at all, but I think social work was in its infancy back then. I remember the truant officer coming to the house now and again but I don't remember much about all that.
9. We were found guilty and sentenced to between one and three years at an approved school, which was the standard sentence. I remember we were told that at the court, that we would be at the approved school for at least a year and no more than eighteen months to two years so long as we behaved ourselves. [REDACTED] was sent to St. Joseph's school in Tranent and I was sent to St. Ninian's school in Gartmore in Stirlingshire. I'm not sure why we went to different approved schools, because they were generally for kids aged eleven to fifteen.

10. I remember I was devastated that I was getting taken away from my family but I was also intelligent enough to know I would get caught at some point in time and the consequences would probably have been getting taken away from my family. I was around eleven when I went there.

St. Ninian's Approved School, Gartmore, Stirlingshire

General

11. St. Ninian's was just like a massive house. When you came in the big front door there was a massive hall and stairs going up to the first level, where the dorms were. On the ground floor there was offices, the dining room and the kitchen area. There was an annexe attached to the main building as well and the classrooms were all in a separate block which was new and hadn't been built long when I went there.
12. I think there were two levels above ground level with dorms, bathrooms and bedrooms on the upper floors.
13. It was all boys and there was about thirty boys in each house. There was four houses so I think there was about 120 boys in total. The houses all had names and if you played sports and things you earned points for your house. I was in De La Salle House and there was also St. Andrew's House and another two, I'm not sure of their names.

Routine at St. Ninian's Approved School

First day

14. I'm sure I was taken straight to St. Ninian's from the courts. I certainly don't remember going home before going there. I can't remember the journey at all.

15. I do remember first seeing St. Ninian's, it was a big old mansion house with big pristine gardens. I actually thought it looked pretty good and thought my time there was going to be quite nice. Once I went inside and saw the Brothers I realised very quickly that wasn't going to be the case.
16. I know it was run by the De La Salle Brothers. I don't remember who met me when I arrived or what I was told, I can't remember anything like that.

Staff

17. I remember SNR was Brother MCA he was getting on a bit and we hardly ever saw him. It was really the other Brothers that ran the place. The other Brothers I remember are Brother MBU, Brother MCN, Brother HGB, Brother MCT, Brother MBZ, Brother Anthony, who was just an old man and a French Brother, called Brother MCP who came when I was about half way through my time there. There was also civilian teachers, I remember Mr MCK who took the juniors and Mr McKenna who was the woodwork teacher. The children called Mr MCK MCK because he acted like a German from the Second World War and was very strict.
18. Brothers MCN and HGB were two particularly cruel and violent Brothers at St. Ninian's. They were responsible for all the beatings I can remember from my time there.
19. Brother MCN was very small some boys were bigger than him. He had the nickname 'MCN' or 'MCN', he had grey hair but was younger looking. I'd think between forty and fifty back then. Brother HGB was taller and leaner, he had a sort of hook nose and wore specs.

Mornings and bedtime

20. I remember we would get up and washed, get our clothes on and go down for breakfast. I think it was a clap of the hands and the lights went on but I don't know

what time that was, it would have been before eight o'clock because we had our breakfast before we went to school.

21. I slept in a big dormitory, with about twenty to twenty-five boys and the age range was probably the same as at the school so about eleven to fifteen. Each house had its own dormitory. We always sat at the same seat at the same table, when we had our meals in the dining room. It was very regimented. That was either by our house or dormitory or it was maybe by our number because we all had a number as well. My number was No. ■ and it was used on your locker, clothes and shoes, things like that. The Brothers called you by your name not by your number.
22. We went to bed about 8:30 pm or 9:00 pm. We got a supper, cocoa and a muffin or something like that, before we went off to bed. The Brothers would always be there, gliding up and down the dormitories, to make sure everything was okay. I can't remember anything untoward happening at bed time other than the treatment of the boys who wet their beds.

Mealtimes/Food

23. We had porridge and cornflakes and things like that. I can't remember ever having a fried breakfast or anything hot like that. The food was perfectly fine, I thought it was anyway, but I hadn't been used to eating much before I went there. My only problem was with the blancmange, I couldn't eat that so I used to put it in my pocket.
24. I wasn't ever force fed because I was sly enough to put it in my pocket but I did see a boy, ■ I think his name was who didn't want to eat his porridge. Brother ■ told him people were starving in other countries so he would eat it. The lad tried but then vomited and he was made to eat the vomit and the porridge.
25. That happened quite frequently to boys that didn't eat their food and were caught. It was mainly Brother ■ that did that in the dining room, but ■ would do it as well.

Washing

26. The washing was supervised by the monks, everything was supervised by them to be honest. There wasn't anything odd or funny happened at wash times, certainly not in the morning, as the boys were all in a rush to get dressed and down for breakfast. Mornings were never a problem.
27. In the morning we just had a wash at a sink. We also had a communal shower area, that was a massive square shower area with about four showers on each wall, it was all open and there was plenty of room for a lot of us to get in. We would only shower after sport or when we'd been outside doing some activity and it had been raining. I don't think it was every night.
28. If anybody spoke or giggled during the showers any of those two Brothers, MCN and HGB, would scream something and then come running into the showers lashing and flailing their belts about, hitting everybody. They hit us across the back or the legs, just anywhere on your naked body. It didn't matter if you were innocent everybody would just get it. Boys would have bruises and stuff, that was quite common.
29. If it was another Brother who was on duty that wouldn't happen, they weren't all like that. Some of the Brothers were nice and kind, it was really only MCN and HGB that would carry out that kind of physical punishment.

Clothing/uniform

30. There was a uniform at St. Ninian's, we wore sort of flannel shorts, we had a singlet type of sports vest, we had quite a warm shirt, it was khaki or navy and we had a normal neck jumper. They gave us socks and shoes and they were fine. All the clothing was provided for us. We didn't wear any of our own clothing at all.

Leisure

31. We usually had something to do but if you didn't get involved in some sort of pastime or activity you would just be left to play in the yard. We had a big fenced concrete yard where we could play or kick a ball about, that was about it.
32. I do remember doing some extracurricular activities such as canoeing which I enjoyed. We did that at the River Forth, we did activities like hill walking and things like that.
33. There were horses there, Mr MCK had horses and he would take us horse riding. I would say Mr MCK was quite cruel as well though. Not so much on the physical side, he was cruel towards people's feelings. If anyone was causing him a problem he would make them go under the horses, crawl underneath a horse, and you would be terrified in case you got kicked. That didn't happen to me and I didn't see it happen to other boys but I did hear boys talk about it and say how scared they were.

Trips and holidays

34. The school has their own old grey bus and we would sometimes go on day trips. That's what I would do as you were always better getting out and about. We went out on a trip every Sunday, usually we would go to Ardrossan for the day. They were happy trips and we would be singing away in the bus with Brother MBZ.

Schooling

35. I actually loved the schooling at St. Ninian's. I was put into junior straight away. It was Junior B, then Junior A, then Senior B and Senior A. I was only in the juniors for about two days before I was put straight into the seniors. I was quite intelligent and it was Brother MBU who taught the seniors, who was good, so I enjoyed my education at St. Ninian's for the wee while I was there. It was Mr MCK who taught the juniors.
36. I don't know if Brother MCN or Brother HGB were teachers but if they were I don't think anyone would have been learning much from them. I wouldn't have thought they were trained as teachers, they just weren't equipped to look after kids, it's as simple as that.

37. I don't actually remember any discipline in the school certainly not in my class, there may have been, in other classes, but it's not something I remember.
38. I didn't sit any exams at St. Ninian's but I did sit exams later on when I was at St. John's. I would say the education at St. Ninian's was pretty reasonable considering I don't think there were any trained teachers there. I'd say they tried their best with education.

Healthcare

39. There was a matron at St. Ninian's, she was quite a nice young woman but I don't remember her name, she was only there for very limited stuff. She would maybe put a bandage on you if you'd fallen and burst your knee or had a cut. She didn't do much to be honest. I don't think they bothered too much about people's health at all.

Religious instruction

40. All the boys were Catholic at St. Ninian's. We said out prayers before meals and went to mass on Sunday but other than that I wouldn't say they were that strict on religion. We must have gone to confession, but I can't remember ever going to that. It wasn't forced down your throat and there was never any punishments to do with religion. Nothing I can remember.

Work

41. We did keep our boots and shoes clean. We also made our beds, cleaned the dorms and the corridors and that kind of housework. I remember using these big bumpers to clean and polish the floors. It was like a big rectangular mop. We all did that, that would be from about the age of eleven and it was hard work.

Birthdays and Christmas

42. There were no celebrations that I remember for Christmas and certainly not for your birthday. There might have been for Christmas but I can't remember.

Personal possessions

43. We must have had a locker at our bedside with a toothbrush and a towel or a facecloth but I can't remember. I don't remember anyone ever being allowed to have any personal possessions at all.

Bed Wetting

44. I didn't suffer from bed wetting I just felt sorry for the boys who did. If any of the boys wet the bed it was just terrible, they were treated very badly and were shown up to everybody as being weak and inadequate. The Brothers would make them stand naked in front of all the other boys in their dorm. It was like they were put on display for everybody else to see, as if wetting the bed was something bad.
45. I don't remember any boys being belted for wetting the bed but they certainly were abused in that they were shown up and embarrassed in front of all the other boys. We would have our beds inspected in the morning when we got up but I think the boys that were more likely to pee the bed would be getting checked anyway.
46. It was a shame because it happened every morning and the Brothers would get the boys who had wet the bed to pull off all their wet sheets straight away and then strip off their pyjamas. Then they would be ridiculed and made to walk and carry all their stuff out of the dorm naked, to go off and have a shower or whatever. I don't know what happened after that, I just remember feeling sorry for them when they were standing holding all their sheets with no clothes on.

Family Contact

47. I never had any family visits in all the time I was at St. Ninian's. They probably didn't have the money to travel to see me. We didn't have many relatives outside our family

so there would be no one to leave the other kids with if my mum or dad were going to visit me.

48. We were allowed to write home and I got letters from my family as well. I don't know if any letters were checked or censored, I have no idea.

Social work visits

49. I didn't see any social workers or anyone from the authorities at all when I was at St. Ninian's. I don't recall any inspections or visits from anyone. After the judge's verdict that was it, we didn't see or hear anything from anyone.

Running away

50. I absconded about three or four times when I was at St. Ninian's. It was because of the regime and the way I was being treated there. Sometimes the day after you were caught and came back the Brothers would punish you in front of all the other boys to show to them that we shouldn't run away.
51. The punishment was to send you down to a field with just shorts on and a pair of sandals. It didn't matter if it was raining or whatever, you would just have to stand there and there was always a Brother somewhere nearby watching you. The boys would be playing and you had to stand there all the time, sometimes you were there for hours on end, until night time.
52. One time I ran away with some pals and we were living on turnips for about two days. We ended up in this builder's lorry for shelter and the police found us and took us away. Sometimes I did do a bit of stealing, just to get some food really.
53. It was usually the policed that caught me when I ran away although I remember once I didn't get very far away and it was a Brother, or someone from the school, that caught me. It was just the same every time, you would get a beating or be sent out to the field.

54. I was never asked by the police why I was running away, not once, they weren't interested. I thought that's the way it was in approved schools, that if you spoke against them at all you were beaten for it, so no one ever said a word about anything.

Discipline

55. The discipline that was used was the belt or the cane and they also made us stand out in the field. I'm not aware of any punishments being recorded anywhere. I would doubt very much if anything was ever recorded.

Abuse at St. Ninian's Approved School

56. I told you about boys being forced to eat food. Sometimes boys that didn't eat their food would also get dragged away and lashed with the belt as well. It sometimes happened in front of everyone. It was a normal leather tawse that the Brothers used. It was split at the end and was made out of leather.
57. I'm not sure if all the Brothers had belts but it was only MCN and HGB that I ever saw using belts persistently on the boys. I seldom saw the rest of the Brothers hitting anybody. Brother HGB actually used a cane as well and I would say he used it more than the belt. It was sorer as well, it was a lot harder than a belt and stung more but I only know that from boys telling me, I was never caned. HGB was a violent guy and you didn't need to do very much for him to cane you. Most of the time during recreation you would see him hitting somebody with his cane. I saw that and it was scary. It could be for any reason and it happened on a daily basis. Everybody just went silent whenever he came into a room.
58. MCN and HGB did try not to hit the boys legs, other than in the shower area, they would try to hit us on the back or body but you would still see boys running about the yard with belt and cane marks on their legs.

59. One person could just be talking harmlessly in the dining room and [MCN] or [HGB] would come in and randomly start laying into them with their belt. They did that, just lashed out at people for no reason. It was all about having absolute control, it was such a brutal regime.
60. What astonishes me more than anything is that there were plenty other Brothers who were quite decent, so why did they not say something. So many of the other Brothers and the head ones saw what was going on and did nothing. That beats the hell out of me and they're just as guilty as far as I'm concerned. Were they scared of the Catholic Church or something?
61. I told you about one punishment for absconding but there was another one they did, that I actually didn't believe until it happened to me. What happened was when you absconded the Brothers would come for you at night. It could be two or four weeks after you'd been caught and brought back but a group of Brothers would come to the dormitory at night and call you outside on to the landing where they would punish you.
62. I remember it well, I was asked by one Brother to get out my bed and come out of the dorm. There was a big throne, like a massive chair there and I was told to lift up my nightshirt, which was all I was wearing and lie across this throne, face down. I wasn't held down but I knew that if I didn't do as they said I would be held down.
63. There was three or four Brothers there and they all ran at me one at a time, hitting my bare backside, my back and the top of the back of my legs with their belts. They kept going until I couldn't take the pain any more. I think I maybe fell off the chair once. I was then taken back to my bed. It was so painful, I had marks all over my backside and legs. That happened to me on two of the occasions when I ran away. It was just physical violence there was no sexual abuse involved in that.
64. The woodwork teacher, Mr McKenna, had an awful habit of putting boys over his knee and pulling their shorts up, as if he was going to smack them. He would rub their buttocks though. It was supposed to be a smack, instead of using the belt but he just rubbed the boys' buttocks. He did that quite a lot and it was in front of all the boys in

the class. It wouldn't even be for a misdemeanour, he would just do that to two or three boys in every session. He did it to me and it just felt uncomfortable, he was getting really intimate, although he didn't touch my penis. Mr McKenna was quite tall, he had grey hair and a big nose.

65. There was also Brother Benedict who ran the boot room, he was a big fat jolly guy and he was always laughing. There were a lot of boys told stories about him interfering with them. I never experienced anything with him but he did always seem to have younger boys on his knee. It just never seemed right, it was definitely dodgy.
66. St. Ninian's was quite a bleak place to be in. I don't remember getting praise from Brothers. I remember Brother **MBU** was good and helped as much as he could in school and Brother **MBZ** had us singing on the bus when we went on trips but I don't remember much else when it came to the Brothers being nice to the boys.
67. It was when all the boys were together that it was better. You'll always get a few bullies but I knew a few of the Glasgow guys, the Stirling guys and the Dundee guys and we all mixed in and it was okay. The main problem was Brother **MCN** and Brother **HGB**.

Reporting of abuse at St. Ninian's Approved School

68. There would have been no point in reporting anything that happened at St. Ninian's, certainly not while I was there. You would be classed as a trouble maker and would just get more beatings. You just kept your mouth shut.

Leaving St. Ninian's Approved School

69. After I'd been at St. Ninian's for about eighteen months I remember I had been running away a few times and I had always been sent down to the field. It had been cold and raining, and I took not well and had to go to the sick bay. I must have been seen by a

doctor and got penicillin or something but I can't remember. I do know I wasn't in the sick bay for long when I was told I could go home for the weekend. That was quite sudden and was the first weekend release I'd ever had. I had been in the sick bay and had been unwell but getting to go home wasn't something I was expecting.

70. I then went home but I stayed home longer than the weekend because I wasn't well. It was during the following week that I collapsed in the house and had to be taken to Maryfield Hospital in Dundee. I was told in the hospital that I had rheumatic fever. I was crippled with that and I lost the use of my legs for about a year. I became very ill and I was in hospital for about six months.
71. Once I was admitted to the hospital, St. Ninian's released me from their care and said I could just stay at home. I was about twelve and a half when I finished at St. Ninian's. They had washed their hands with me because there was no intention of releasing me before that. Looking back now as an adult, I was seriously ill yet all of a sudden I was being discharged from St. Ninian's very quickly so I do feel that all St. Ninian's wanted was to get rid of me. I don't remember any paperwork that had to be completed, I wouldn't know about any of that.

Life at Home (between approved schools)

72. Our family had moved to Beechwood in Dundee by then. My brother [REDACTED] came home not long after me so the family were back together. [REDACTED] would tell me about just the same kind of treatment towards the boys at St. Joseph's in Tranent as I had experienced at St. Ninian's. There was just as much cruelty at St. Joseph's, I think it was the same at all the approved schools at that time. My sister [REDACTED] was also in care, she went to a convent in Aberdeen. She was wild and never went to school. She was treated badly as well.
73. As I've said I was in the hospital for a while and then I spent a while recovering at home. When I had been in the hospital nobody asked and I didn't say anything to anyone about how I was treated at St. Ninian's.

74. When I was better and able to go to school I went to St. John's Secondary School in Dundee. I went straight into second year I'm sure. There still wasn't much money coming into the house. My dad was ill and couldn't work and my mum was still drinking.
75. Basically it wasn't that long before I started breaking into places to try and get us some money so we wouldn't starve. I was caught again and I was up in front of a judge again and that's when I was told I was going to St. John's Approved School in Springboig, Glasgow. It was the same one to three years sentence as before, but once again I was told I could get out in a year to eighteen months if I behaved myself. I was fifteen when I went to St. John's Approved School.
76. I can't remember any officials coming to the house other than truant officers. I don't remember ever having social workers but we might have had them by then.

St. John's Approved School, Springboig, Glasgow

General

77. I remember St. Ninian's much better than St. John's. I really don't remember much about the place at all. All I really remember about what St. John's looked like is that it was quite a big imposing building, that's about it.
78. It was all boys at St. John's and there was about one hundred there. It wasn't the church that ran it, it was civilians and it was a totally different machine from St. Ninian's. It was all Catholic and it was still strict but there was nothing like the same abuse as there was at St. Ninian's. I think you had more of a chance at St. John's because you were older.
79. I can't remember being afraid or worried about anything. It was much busier and you just got on with things. Things were more light hearted, between all the boys, unless it was personal, but most of the guys understood about sticking together.

Routine at St. John's Approved School, Springboig

Staff

80. The staff were all civilian there were no Brothers teaching or involved at all at St. John's. SNR [REDACTED] was Mr HGC [REDACTED] who had been a rugby player and was very strict. The only other member of staff I can remember was Mr Lally the metal work teacher, who was a very nice man.

Mornings/mealtimes

81. We all slept in dorms, maybe twenty boys in a dorm and mixed ages, but all the boys were older than at St. Ninian's. I can't remember getting up and ready for breakfast. I can't remember ever getting a cooked breakfast either so I'm thinking it must have been porridge or cornflakes, something like that.
82. Mealtimes weren't the same as St. Ninian's, we were treated more like young adults so there were never any issues with the food or not eating food, there was nothing like that.

Washing/bathing

83. We had showers at St. John's and there was never any problem. I don't even know if it was supervised. We did all get on, the boys and the teachers, so there was never any problems and there was no abuse.

Schooling

84. As I've said all the teachers were civilians and the teaching was quite good, certainly better than at St. Ninian's. I remember the metalwork teacher, Mr Lally, who I got on

well with. I remember asking him when we would get to sit our 'O' Levels and he said we wouldn't because they didn't do 'O' Levels in Scottish Approved Schools.

85. I told him we surely had a right to sit them and I then fought for us to sit our 'O' levels. I wrote to the Education Secretary to ask about it and I also got help from one of the English teachers. I can't remember the names of any teachers who were involved in that though. I remember four of us did get to sit 'O' Levels, they let us sit English and Arithmetic. Myself and my friend were the only ones to pass them both. That was definitely a success. I think we were the first to sit 'O' Levels in an Approved School in Scotland and I remember Mr HGC as SNR, felt quite honoured about all of that.

86. I did enjoy the education at St. John's and I'm very proud in achieving my 'O' Levels the way I did.

Trips and holidays

87. I'm sure St. John's had their own bus. I think we went on trips, I certainly remember going to the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh in 1970. I'm sure we also went up to the Campsie Hills and places like that for day trips.

Leisure

88. There was things to do about the place. I remember we went canoeing and there was a lot of extracurricular activities so there were things for us to do. The teachers got into whatever it was they were teaching, they enjoyed it and we enjoyed it.

Work/chores

89. We did some basic work about the home. There were no cleaners so the boys did everything. We cleaned and polished floors, tidied up the yard outside, stuff like that.

Family contact

90. I didn't get any visits from any of my family in all my time at St. John's. I did write home and I received letters from my mum when I was in St. John's. I don't know if any of the letters had been checked by anyone at the school.

Discipline

91. It was disciplined at St. John's, there was a regime and you had to follow the rules and keep yourself right. If you did step out of line then you would get the belt. It was more traditional though, like six of the best. It was just a leather tawse and it was on the hands in front of the rest of the class. I didn't see anyone using a cane at St. John's.
92. I have no idea if the punishments were recorded I didn't ever see anyone writing down who had been punished and why, nothing like that.

Abuse at St. John's Approved School, Springboig

93. There is one thing that stands out for me at St. John's. It was when we all went to the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh in 1970. I refused to stand up for the national anthem and **SNR** **HGC** told me I had better get up and sing the anthem. I told him I wasn't going to stand up and I didn't but I paid for that when we got back to St. John's.
94. When we got back he took me into his office and laid into me. I'd never been in that part of the school before and it was just him and me. He basically battered me, and started physically hitting me with his hands and fists. I remember he was telling me that if I was representing St. John's School I would do as he says and not whatever I wanted to do. He told me I had embarrassed him in front of people and he really was apoplectic with rage and just kept going.
95. I have to say that was the only time I got any violence in all the time I was at St. John's. He took it out on me because I stood up against him, and made him look bad, that's

all it was. I wouldn't have expected him to do that kind of thing, he was a very strict man but usually his voice was enough for you to keep quiet. I didn't see or hear of him behaving like that ever again.

96. I have to say that St. John's was much better than St. Ninian's and that single incident of abuse from Mr HGC, for me, was a one off. There was no other abuse that I saw at all.

Reporting of abuse at St. John's Approved School, Springboig

97. I didn't report any abuse from my time at St. John's. I didn't tell anyone else at the school or my parents, there was no point. I thought all the approved schools were the same and that was just what they did. I thought they had absolute authority over you and I was in their charge. It might have been a bit much, but I thought they were allowed to do it.
98. No one ever came to see me and asked me how I was getting on, there was never anything like that. As far as I was concerned I was just put there and that was it.
99. It was a different time back then, you were in these places for your own good because you had done something wrong. You didn't think about telling on adults or complaining. Anyone I knew would just have told me I was in there for a reason.

Leaving St. John's Approved School, Springboig

100. I was in St. John's for about a year and a half, so I must have left when I was about sixteen. I was certainly there for the Commonwealth Games in 1970 and I would have been nearly sixteen then.
101. It must have been that I'd been there long enough and I could come out and continue with my secondary education. I don't remember any reviews or meetings or anything

like that. I don't remember being told very long before I left I was just told a short time prior and that was me. I don't even remember how I left and got home.

Life after being in care

102. My dad had died when I was fifteen, not long after I left secondary school and went to St. John's Approved School. Things then changed at home. My mum was still drinking so I decided to leave and I went away working in hotels with my sister [REDACTED].
103. I did go back and visit my mum in Dundee and I ended up getting caught for another theft. I was older then, about eighteen or nineteen, and I was sent for borstal training for that. They didn't give you a sentence, you were just sent to do the training and it could take nine months or a year or whatever. I did about nine months.
104. After that I went down to London for a while and worked there, just doing jobs here and there. I also worked with an Irish crew on the roads in England and I sold Christmas trees in Dundee for about ten years. The last fourteen years I've been working in a berry farm near where I live.
105. I have a family, I'm married and have two daughters and five grandchildren as well.

Impact

106. I have had and still have nightmares about St. Ninian's. I can have sleepless nights thinking about it. I think about how wrong it was that no one ever did anything about it, even my own parents, thinking it was all okay that's stayed with me.
107. I still have problems with authority. I never take things at face value and have this distrust of the whole system. Somebody the age I was takes everything in and because of that I've always had that bad mistrust of authority. It stayed with me for a long time

and probably still is with me but I'm more balanced now and able to understand and deal with it.

108. For society to allow that to happen to children, makes me feel there's nobody there on your side. I understand it's not like that now but at the time when I was growing up there was nothing I could do.
109. I knew some of the things that were being done were wrong, to lash out at someone at a dinner table because they haven't eaten their porridge is wrong and what Mr HGC did to me that was wrong. It just puts your whole belief in the whole system down.
110. I do feel sad that it was all allowed to happen to a child. I would hate to see my daughters in a place like that. I think that's something about being in the approved school, it's kept my family closer.
111. I do worry about something like that ever happening to a member of my own family. I don't think my childhood affects my family but I never thought much of my childhood and it was never something I would bring up and speak about. It's not until recently that I have been speaking up about it. I am quite insular and don't mix with a lot of people, I'm sure that's another thing linked to my childhood.
112. I do also wonder about my rheumatic fever and whether or not I would have suffered from that had I not been left standing out in that field in the cold and rain. I was out there for hours. That's something I will probably never know.
113. What I do know about that is that the whole thing, as in being in St. Ninian's, having the rheumatic fever and being in St. John's, completely broke up my education. I think I would have done really well at school without all those interruptions. I would have sat 'A' levels and maybe gone on to university but that just wasn't to be. That was a lost opportunity for me.

Treatment/support

114. I haven't had any support or counselling not then and not now. It was a different time back then.

Reporting of Abuse

115. I have never made any official report to the police or to any authority about any of the abuse I was subjected to when I was in care.

Records

116. I've never made any attempt to try and recover any of my records from my times at St. Ninian's or St. John's approved schools.

Lessons to be Learned

117. I would say there needs to be an advisor involved in the care of the children. Someone who is not from the place they are staying in, but can regularly go there and speak to the boys or girls.
118. At the very least there needs to be an outside influence that listens to them and know what's going on. More supervision from an outside source is definitely what's needed because they were getting away with obscene cruelty at St. Ninian's, in particular.

Hopes for the Inquiry

119. The truth has to come out, so that everyone is aware of it. I don't know what that would change, there needs to be active change, but I suppose that's what the Inquiry is all about.
120. I think a lot of people suffered needlessly and never heard any explanation for any of that suffering. I would like that to come out.
121. As I have already said, there needs to be more attention given from the outside world. As children we were confined and insulated against the world, children need to get out and need to mix with other boys and girls.
122. I certainly don't believe that any religious people that aren't married should be in charge of children. Maybe the odd person but not generally because that's just wrong as they basically don't have the understanding or wherewithal to look after children.

Other information

123. 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. HGA

Dated. 13/05/2023