

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Alexander BUCHANAN

Support person present: No

1. My full name is Alexander William Buchanan. I'm known now as Alex. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1951. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. On my birth certificate my name is actually Alexander Devlin because Devlin was my birth father's surname. He died when I was three and when my mum re-married a man called [REDACTED] and I took on Buchanan as my surname. I've been known as Alex Buchanan ever since.
3. My mum was [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] and my step dad, who I called dad, was [REDACTED]. My dad was a van boy, I can't remember what else he did, and my mum was a clippie on the buses. My mum passed away in 2000 and my dad in 1984.

4.

[REDACTED]

5.

[REDACTED]

6.



7. I was born in the Gorbals in Glasgow in 1951. I've no recollection of life with my first dad. I used to run away from the house all the time because I was getting battered upside down [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] once hit me with a poker in the eye then took me to hospital and told them I had fallen of the middens the dykes. I nearly lost my eyesight from that. My mother used to call me *'the habitual wanderer'*.
8. We lived in a small one bedroom flat with just the one bed. I didn't go to school for very long, it was St. Frances's and St. John's Primary Schools but I was never at either of them for very long as I kept absconding.
9. It wasn't a happy childhood, I just remember getting beaten up [REDACTED]. I don't remember food or meals as such, I just remember my dad coming in on a Friday night with a big bag of chips and putting it on the table for [REDACTED]. My mum, for some reason, would then give [REDACTED] one and a half slices of bread, I've never found out why that was.
10. The police were always involved. They used to catch me and take me to the police shop and give me a cup of tea and a biscuit. I would tell them I didn't want to go back home because [REDACTED] would hit me and they would say they'd make sure [REDACTED] didn't hit me. As soon as their hands were off me and they were away [REDACTED] was back hitting me. [REDACTED] used to lock me in the room with all my clothes taken off me because I used to take off out the window.
11. I don't remember any social workers back then, the only thing that springs to mind is my probation officer. I do remember going up to court around 10th May 1961 after I'd just turned nine. My mum was told she could take me home and she said 'no', she didn't want to take me home.
12. I don't remember much more about the circumstances around me going to Bellfield. I just know I was sent there because I was running away from the house and things like

that. I think it was a court decision but I don't remember. It could have been to do with my continual absconding as well. There might have been social work involvement but I can't remember.

Bellfield Home, Dumbarton

13. I remember Bellfield was out Dumbarton and Helensburgh way and it was a big house. I don't remember going there. My main memory is sitting looking out a big bay window. I remember there was a man there who played the mandolin who had a missing finger, and I would sit there looking out that window listening to him playing.
14. I just know it was Bellfield, I've not seen that in any notes. I've not got any notes or records, but I know that's what it was called.
15. I don't remember anything about what we did each day or who any of the staff were. I think we had wee rooms, but it might have been dormitories, I just don't remember.
16. I think it was a sort of remand home and I think it was just boys but I really don't remember. I was only there a matter of weeks and I must have been about nine or ten when I was in there. I don't remember anything bad happening, certainly nothing that I would want to tell the Inquiry about.

Leaving Bellfield

17. I think somebody came up to me one day and told me I was going home. I went home, but as soon as went home [REDACTED] was up to [REDACTED] same games so I just started running away again. I was only home a couple of weeks before I was remanded to Larchgrove to wait for a place to come up at an approved school.
18. When I was ten I got charged with reset for taking two bottles of stout from a drunk man who was lying in the street and taking them home for my dad. The police had

seen me do it and ended up charging me. I went to court in Govan and I pled guilty. My mum was in the court as well as the police.

19. I'm not sure if that was the first time I was remanded at Larchgrove, but I know I was ten then because I had to be ten to be charged by the police. I might have sent been there before when I was running away. I remember a term that was used by the courts and at Larchgrove 'C&P - Care and Protection' which was used to describe what they were doing with me because I was running away and becoming a danger to myself.

Larchgrove Assessment Centre, Glasgow

20. Larchgrove was on Edinburgh Road in Glasgow. It was run by Glasgow Council. It was all low buildings that were linked on to each other. It was all on the one level and there were bedrooms with bunk beds, a dining room area, a gymnasium and a walled play area but I don't remember any school or classes or anything like that. It was all boys at Larchgrove as well.
21. Larchgrove was supposed to be a secure unit, but I remember running away once. I didn't want to be there so I was always trying to get out, I know that. I was in there at least three times. It was only ever for a couple of weeks and I'm sure the last time was when I was waiting to go to an approved school. That time I was there for six weeks.
22. The only staff I remember from Larchgrove are big McKinnon and **GIA** and the **LTB-LTE** brothers. They all wore civilian clothing, not uniforms. Big McKinnon was alright, he took the football but **GIA** was a bit of an animal, he liked to have a dig at you.
23. The younger boys must have been about seven or eight and the older ones were as old as fifteen. There would have been about a hundred boys there.

Routine at Larchgrove

24. I remember you woke up quite early and went and washed your teeth and had your breakfast. I don't remember what the food was like. We wore shorts and a jumper I think but I don't really remember that or much more about the place.
25. If you were a certain age you could smoke twice a day, I remember that.
26. I think [REDACTED] came and visited me once at Larchgrove but visits were very rare. I can't remember much about that.

School / leisure time

27. I can't remember there being any schooling at Larchgrove.
28. There was a recreation area outside which was walled off and if it was raining we would use the gymnasium. We played football and there was a television room, that was about it.

Bedwetting

29. I wet my bed at Larchgrove. The staff used to wake you up at certain times through the night to check if you'd wet your bed. I think we were in dorms. If you had wet the bed they would throw you in to a cold shower, remove your sheets and wipe down the mattress protector. After your cold shower you would have to go back and lie in the bed. We just had to lie on the bed, we didn't get fresh pyjamas, we were naked and it was freezing. I remember curling up in my bed chattering with the cold.
30. It was the night watchman that came in and checked the bed. I can't remember his name. It was just him and he would wake me and tell me it was time to go to the toilet. He'd take me in to the shower and tell me to take my pyjamas off and get under the cold shower. It was freezing cold water. I did get a towel to dry myself.

31. That happened to me quite a few times as I was a serious bed wetter at Larchgrove and I knew it was with the trauma.

Discipline

32. You could smoke in there but you would lose that privilege as a punishment if you misbehaved. I can't think of any other privileges we had that you could lose. I was told when I went in to Larchgrove that I would be belted if I misbehaved as well.

Running away

33. I ran away from Larchgrove just the one time. I pleaded with Big McKinnon to let me play football and he said I could as long as I didn't run away. His team then got a penalty at the far end of the pitch and when he went down to take the penalty, I was off, over the wall and away.
34. I went home but my mum told me I wasn't staying there so I went to my auntie [REDACTED] in Pollockshaws. She had me for four or five days then took me back to Larchgrove. I do remember her saying to them not to hit me for running away. I got the belt from [REDACTED] for running away that time. No one ever asked me why I was running away though.

Abuse at Larchgrove

35. [REDACTED] I don't remember his first name, liked to have a dig at you. He used to punch and kick the boys. That would be on the side of the face and with a clenched fist. He would also kick you up the behind. It could just be because you were standing talking to your pals and not moving along or something like that. [REDACTED] would give you the belt as well, on your backside but over your clothes. I got it from him as well as other staff quite a few times, but it was always over my clothes.

36. **GIA** was there every time I was at Larchgrove and he always behaved like that. He would kick and punch all the boys including me. He was in his late 30's or early 40's, had dark hair, was quite stout and wore black horn rimmed glasses and checked jackets.
37. I never saw anyone else hitting any of the boys like **GIA** did. He was my tormentor at Larchgrove.

Leaving Larchgrove

38. After I'd done my six weeks or so at Larchgrove a place became available for me at St. Ninian's. I was told the night before I left that I was going to St. Ninian's and the next morning my social work or community officer took me there. I didn't go home. I was taken straight to St. Ninian's. That was the only time I ever saw my social worker at Larchgrove.
39. I don't know who told me but I was told I was going to be at St. Ninian's for an indefinite period. I don't remember exactly what was said but I do remember being told I couldn't stay any longer than three years before I had to move on to the next level.

St. Ninian's, Gartmore

40. St. Ninian's was in a place called Gartmore which is three miles from Aberfoyle. I didn't like the thought of going to a place like that and I was going to run away the first chance I got but I was happy to be getting out of Larchgrove.
41. St. Ninian's was just like a big house and it was run by the De La Salle Brothers. It had a lot of panelling and it makes me think of the Harry Potter house now. There were stairs up to the dormitories on the left and then there was a lower floor with the recreation room. There was also a chapel and the dining room.

42. It was all boys at St. Ninian's and there must have been a hundred, maybe more. I think the youngest was about eight or nine and the oldest was about fifteen. We were divided up into four different houses they were called St. Patrick, St. Andrew's, De La Salle and another one I can't remember. I was in St. Andrew's house.
43. The De La Salle Brothers had a mission statement which was 'health, wealth, education and the chastisation of the children they were taking care of'. I read that statement once when I was doing research into the place when I was older.
44. The main Brothers I remember from St. Ninian's are Brother ^{MCA} and Brother Benedict whose nickname was 'Bootsie'. He was called that because he was always kicking boys. Brother Benedict's real name is Michael Murphy and he's now about ninety years of age. I know that because I read about him in the paper during a court case in 2002.
45. Other Brothers I remember are Brother ^{MCT} and Brother Anthony who was the gardener. Brother Anthony was deaf and would go about singing songs, he was a great old guy. Then there was a Mr ^{MCK} who was a civilian and was in charge of the stables. ^{LOJ} rings a bell as well but it can be confusing because you can go from one place to another and some of the Brothers can have the same names.

Routine at St. Ninian's

46. On the first day I was taken in the main entrance and I met Brother ^{MCA} who was ^{SNR}. They sorted my paperwork and I was left there. Brother ^{MCA} told me they didn't like bad boys there and that they punished bad boys. I knew right away I was going to get punished there. I suppose he was letting me know the story if I misbehaved.
47. After that I got some kit and I was taken up to the dormitory and told where my bed was. There were about twenty beds in my dormitory. I had a bed and a wee cupboard

for my kit which was my toothbrush, toothpaste, soap and a towel. I remember we were given Gibbs toothpaste which was in a wee red tin.

48. One of the Brothers would get you up in the morning. We had showers at St. Ninian's, we had them maybe once or twice a week, but in the morning you would get washed, go for your breakfast and then go to our classes. When we were finished our classes for the day we went into a recreation area which was a square area with a wire fence round it. We would be called in for our evening meals from the outdoor recreation area, I remember that.
49. We went to bed about seven or eight o'clock and the lights were turned off about nine o'clock.

Mealtimes/Food

50. We had all our meals in the dining room. The food was disgusting. Brother Benedict used to force feed me. I still remember boiled liver, sago and porridge with big lumps. Friday was fish day and it was black, curled up and had bones in it with what was supposed to be a lemon sauce.

Clothing/uniform

51. We had a uniform for the house that we were in. I remember De La Salle had a red and grey jumper, St. Patrick's was green and yellow, St. Andrew's was blue and white and I forget the other one. We all wore wee grey shorts as well. I can't remember anything else about the clothes. I don't remember anything about the laundry of the clothes.

Leisure time

52. There was a points system at St. Ninian's and if you had so many points you could do things at the weekends. You could go to the Allan Park Cinema in Stirling or go to

Annfield and watch Stirling Albion play football. If you were a baddie, like I was, you wouldn't get that, you would be sent on walks.

Holidays

53. We did get home leave but I didn't want to take that because I never wanted to go home. I don't think I was ever forced to go home.
54. I'm sure I was even in St. Ninian's for Christmas as well but I don't remember much about that, I don't remember what I got for Christmas at all.

Schooling

55. You had to be at the school, you couldn't skip it. It was similar subjects to the outside schools except for the religious education, which was a bit in your face. We did spelling, arithmetic, geography, Latin, italic writing and things like that at the school. I was in classes with boys my age group. I'm not too sure about the class size. I couldn't have been that bad as I won the spelling contest three years in a row, geography two years in row and history once.
56. I quite liked school but I got into it so they weren't watching me and then I could run away. They were thinking I was doing not bad and then, all of a sudden, I was away.
57. It was the Brothers that did all the teaching but they would change depending on the subject. I only remember the one classroom, so we must have just stayed in the one classroom all day.

Healthcare

58. I can't actually remember ever having any medical treatment at St. Ninian's. I don't remember seeing a doctor or a nurse. They must have had one but I don't have any recollection.

Religious instruction

59. We got a lot of religious instruction. We had to learn the Stations of the Cross and I was an altar boy at St. Ninian's. That ended when me and a pal, [REDACTED], got into the vestry and got a bottle of wine. We got drunk and I wasn't an altar boy again after that.

Work

60. I used to watch the bantam chickens. I think I was given that job and I just checked them and made sure they were fed and watered. It was an okay job. I came in one day and about six or eight of them had their heads lying all over the place. The rats had got into them.
61. We used to go out potato picking as well, at six or seven in the morning when it was stone cold freezing. We would be in wee short trousers. The farmer would come with his trailer and maybe Brother Benedict would come along as well. We weren't paid anything for that and we didn't ever get any pocket money either. I think they did give some of the boys money but I never got any because I was always a baddie, I would never do what they told me.
62. I also used to work in the stables. I helped groom the horses and muck them out, that sort of thing. I think I was told to do that but I didn't mind because it got me out of the main school.
63. I remember a boy called [REDACTED] from Dundee, was once kicked in the head by a horse. I used to work in the stables and groom horses. I would take them out for walks and I told [REDACTED] to keep away from the rear end of that horse but he didn't and it kicked him. I thought he was going to die he had this huge egg on his head and the Brothers came and gave him his last rites, but he survived.

Bed Wetting

64. I was still wetting the bed at St. Ninian's. It was dealt with in the same way. I was put into a cold shower, then I had to wipe down the bed with the sheet I had and get back into the bed, on the plastic sheet or mattress, whatever it was. It was the night watchman who we called HPE [REDACTED] or Brother Benedict that checked the bed wetters at a certain time at night. It was maybe two o'clock and five o'clock or something like that. I remember pulling my legs up, curling up tight and holding on to the sheets not letting go when he was about. It was only Benedict that made us have a cold shower not any other staff.
65. I was terrified of Brother Benedict, he was an animal. I can remember wee boys crying every single night in the dorms, saying things like 'mammie, mammie get me out of here, I promise I won't do it again'. There were a lot of boys crying for their mums and dads and Benedict would pull the sheets over their heads and tell them to shut up or they were next for a belting.
66. I have a memory of the night watchman, HPE [REDACTED], standing over the beds of the young boys through the night, quite close to them. I can't say what he was doing and I know he tried it with me once but I told him to 'fuck off' and he didn't do it again.

Family contact / visitors

67. It was very rare that any visitors came to St. Ninian's. I think my mum came once or twice and [REDACTED] came once as well. We did get time together and we went out into the grounds. I would tell my mum about the things that were going on but I got fed up telling her and not being believed.
68. I never saw a social worker or anyone like that in all the time I was at St. Ninian's, at least I don't remember any visits like that.

Running away

69. I absconded from St. Ninian's within the first couple of days. I reckon I absconded about twenty times in total. I was belted every time I returned and I'd get a loss of privileges.
70. We would just nip outside and when the Brothers weren't looking we'd be in to the woods and away. Sometimes we were caught by a farmer when we were in his field eating the beautiful damsons. He would phone the approved school and sometimes he would give us a cup of tea and a couple of pieces. Then a Brother would come round and take you back to the school and you'd get belted that day or sometimes the next day, by Brother MCA or Brother Benedict.

Discipline

71. We were belted and there was a loss of privileges, which could be not getting to go to the cinema or the football on a Saturday. The baddies, like me, would get sent on a long walk into the Trossachs and back. We did hill walking up there and that was a punishment as we were a young age and were being made to walk six or seven miles in all weather.
72. Another punishment they had was with the wee red spelling book they had. You would be put in the corner of the dorm about seven o'clock at night and you'd be in that corner until about eleven o'clock at night learning all the spellings. You were standing in the corner with your face right in the book. Somehow I remember it was a wee red and white squiggly book and it was quite thin. If you'd done something MCA wanted to punish you for he sometimes gave you that punishment and you would have to learn how to spell words from the pages in that book.
73. When you'd finished he would have a tutor test you to make sure you'd learnt the spelling. I was asked by MCA to be a tutor but I didn't know how to spell anything so I would just tell the boys to go to bed. MCA caught me doing that once and I ended up in the corner with the spelling book myself.

74. Something that Brother ^{MCT} did was to have our pockets sewn up. He would send us to have them sewn up by the nurse or whoever and that was to stop us putting our hands in our pockets.

Abuse at St. Ninian's

75. I remember as you went in the main door Brother ^{MCA} would sometimes be sitting on the right watching television with two boys by his side. He would have them put their hands inside his cassock. He would ask boys if they wanted to sit next to him while he was watching the television. He did that with me and I told him no and point blank refused. I had seen boys with their hands inside his cassock and I had a feeling they were playing with him so there was no way I was doing that.
76. I had heard boys talking about it and saying he made them put their hands inside his cassock and he then made them masturbate him. Boys would speak quite freely and openly about that. There was a boy from Stirling with a Polish sounding name that did it. I remember he had no tear ducts so he couldn't cry. He would take a penny from boys who wanted to kick him in the privates.
77. Brother ^{MCA} had a finger that was all black from nicotine. When he caught a boy swearing he would get them to kneel in front of him and he would stick this black finger in your mouth to the back of your tongue, hold on to you and pull it down the length of your tongue. It would make you gag and you could taste the nicotine in your mouth.
78. He was the only one that ever did that and he did it to me quite a lot. He would hear me swearing, come and get me to kneel down and stick his bony finger in my mouth. When he did that to me I used to tell him I was going to tell my mother but that never stopped him. He was quite short, really thin with ruddy cheeks and grey hair. He must have been in his 60's then.

79. Another thing Brother MCA did was to give you the strap over these black pants. He would make us put on these very thin silky black gym shorts and then belt us across our backsides. I think it was because they were so thin but the trousers we wore were a kind of mohair and were thicker, so were told to put these shorts on. That was downstairs, that's where all the punishment took place.
80. It was a brown black leather strap and was about two and a half feet long and had these wee strips at one end. You would usually go to Brother MCA's study and you would have to lean over this big oak table. I've worked out that I reckon I was belted over 200 times at St. Ninian's. It was always MCA or Benedict that gave the belt.
81. They would both be there when you were belted but it would only be one or the other that belted you. On average I would say I was belted about six to eight times every time I was belted and just about every time I had to wear the black pants.
82. Brother Benedict force fed me. I once told him I wasn't eating the fish on a Friday and he told me I was. I refused and he started getting bits of it on a fork and pushing them into my mouth. He was pushing my head back with one hand and trying to force the fork into my mouth with the other. I did take some in my mouth and swallow it but then I went straight to the toilet and I was sick in there.
83. We had boiled liver once and I took a hankie in with me, put the boiled liver in my hankie and stuck it in my pocket, but it was boiling hot. Brother Benedict, who called me 'Boo Boo' which came from my surname Buchanan, came round and said I'd done well finishing my food. My pocket was on fire and soon as he was away I ran to the toilet and my leg was all burnt from the boiling hot liver.
84. I've not eaten seafood or poultry for sixty years, I'm scared to taste some foods now. I'm really averse to some and that's down to St. Ninian's. It wasn't just Brother Benedict, other Brothers forced you to eat as well but he was the most forceful one. We were forced to eat the bones of the chicken and the bones of the fish. That was in the dining hall and all the boys were there as were other Brothers but nobody would

ever do anything to stop it. That happened to me and other boys too many times to recall. Just thinking about it now makes me feel sick.

85. Brother Benedict was always kicking boys, including me, up the bum and I mean right up the bum. He just liked doing it, he was an utter out and out thug and bully.
86. There was a wee Polish boy at St. Ninian's called Emo Szula who was actually raped by Brother Benedict when I was there. He was about ten or eleven when that happened, around the same age as me. I think this was around 1963. He told me what had happened about a month after and he told me to watch out for Brother Benedict. He called him a big bastard.
87. I think that saved me because I was a cheeky wee guy but I was then careful around Brother Benedict. For months on end when I was washing at the sink in my pyjama bottoms Brother Benedict would come up behind me, put his arms round me and hold me saying my nickname 'Boo Boo'. When I saw him coming I would try and jump into the showers to avoid him but sometimes he would get me and he would bounce me up and down and rub up against me and I could feel what was happening behind me, he was getting aroused no doubt about it. I would turn round and tell him to stop it and say I was telling my mum what he was doing. I did tell my mum all that but she always said priests didn't do that, that was her war cry.
88. He did that with all the boys it was a regular thing, there was always boys about the washroom, he wasn't shy or anything, he just did it whenever he felt like doing it. I think it was because he was a man and we were only wee boys. When he did that he was wearing his big black cassock, the same as they all wore. It had a big side pocket that they could put their hands in. I don't know what they wore underneath it.
89. The rape of Emo Szula was in the papers years later and Brother Benedict got found guilty. Emo was awarded £50,000 but the lawyer put in a vow of poverty from the Catholic Church saying Benedict couldn't pay it.

90. Another thing Brother Benedict did to me was to give me these electric shocks. Every morning before breakfast we had head counts outside and Brother Benedict would have these two rods that he would bring out. He would ask me to hold on to the two wee rods and then I'd get an electric shock from them. It would shock right through your hands and it was sore, it made you cry. He did that with other boys as well, not just me. He got a thrill from seeing people cry, I'm sure of it.
91. There was a wee boy from Stirling who we all called [REDACTED]. Benedict gave him the electric shock treatment. I remember that lad was once in a fight with another boy and he got hit in the eye with a snake belt. It almost took his eye out. [REDACTED] and his young brother were another two that were electrocuted and the [REDACTED] brothers from Greenock as well. There were a lot of brothers in St. Ninian's together. Benedict did that with loads of the boys, he would just grab you out the crowd and tell you to hold the wee rods.
92. I once refused to hold on to the rods and I got the belt. I think it was MCA [REDACTED] that gave me the belt that time.
93. Brother MCT [REDACTED] or Brother LOJ [REDACTED] that would come up behind you and whack you across the ear if you were ever standing with your hands in your pockets. It was with a clenched fist and it was so sore. He kept doing that to all the boys. There was both a Brother MCT [REDACTED] and a Brother LOJ [REDACTED] at St. Ninian's and I think this was MCT [REDACTED], he wasn't much taller than me and had sandy coloured hair, but I can be sure.
94. I had a wee friend at St. Ninian's who was called [REDACTED] we called him [REDACTED]. He used to have cotton buds in his ears for an infection he had. That Brother MCT [REDACTED] or LOJ [REDACTED] would hit [REDACTED] across his ear and the Brother knew [REDACTED] had a bad ear. He knew that and deliberately hit him on his ear. [REDACTED] would be crying at that, it really hurt him.
95. We used to call Mr MCK [REDACTED] MCK [REDACTED] because the war had just finished and he wore riding boots and went about with this crop. He would hit boys with that crop, he hit me a couple of times on the back and the bum. I think it was just for delight for him, and it

was sore and stingy. That happened a few times to me when I worked in the stables, but I can't remember what it was for.

Reporting of abuse at St. Ninian's

96. I told my mother about Brother ^{MCA} [REDACTED] but she didn't believe priests would do that. My mother was religious and she would get a package of some kind from the local priest every Monday. She saw no bad in them and just didn't believe me. My mum was the only person I told about what was going on at St. Ninian's.

Leaving St. Ninian's

97. About a week before I left St. Ninian's I was told I was going home. I was about thirteen and I think it was a social worker who drove me home, but I'm not sure. I do know I was no sooner in the house before I was running away again and I was recalled to St. Ninian's.
98. For some reason my mum didn't like me, I don't know if it was because my dad died quite early and she had a break down but she always took it out on me. I was only home for a couple of weeks and then I was back at St. Ninian's for a couple of weeks. I wasn't committing any crimes, the only conviction I had in my younger years was the reset of the bottles of beer in 1961.
99. When I think about it, I may have been recalled to Larchgrove and gone to St. Mary's from there but I'm not sure. I was in Larchgrove more than once and after St. Ninian's I was sent to St. Mary's, that much I do know.

St. Mary's Approved School, Kenmure, Bishopbriggs

100. St. Mary's was run by the De La Salle Brothers as well. It was an open approved school so there were no fences or anything like that. You could walk out the door any time, and I did a few times.
101. I think I was at St. Mary's for about two years but I didn't know how long I was going there for when I went. I was actually quite happy to be going there as I knew I'd be getting long trousers at last. Especially in the winter as when we were out in Gartmore in the winter it was really cold.
102. It was a big, red sandstone building and outside there used to be a statue of St. Mary or someone like that. I remember there was a driveway with a big door. It was just boys and they were aged from about thirteen to fifteen. There were a few hundred I'm sure and some had been convicted and had been done for lots of things.
103. The Brothers names that come into my head from St. Mary's are a Brother **HLY** and a Brother **HLX** who might have been **SNR** and An Irish Brother called Brother **HLW** who was bald with glasses and he was a puncher.

Routine at St. Mary's

104. I think I was taken to St. Mary's by a social worker, but I don't know which one. I was taken to a dormitory and I've not much more memory about that first day.
105. My memories of St. Mary's are that it was very like St. Ninian's and I sometimes get the two places a bit mixed up. I don't seem to remember as much about St. Mary's but it could just be that I'm getting mixed up between the places.
106. There were gang fights between the boys at St. Mary's. There were a lot of fights between Glasgow and Edinburgh gangs. I used to run about with a gang called 'The Bundie' and there were gangs from the 'Cumbie' and the 'Gorbals', those were the

main ones. We would get in fights all the time. The staff knew what was going on and they would let the fights carry on then when they started to peter out they would come in and break things up. That happened in the playground at St. Mary's.

Leisure time

107. We played football matches at the weekends. An outside team would come and play against us or we would maybe go and play them.

Work

108. We did have to go and pick tatties. That was a punishment to me because it meant missing the football and I had to do that quite a few times.

Family contact / visitors

109. [REDACTED] would come and visit me at St. Mary's and we would walk round the grounds. My mum never came to see me there and I can't remember ever seeing any social work people at all.

Running away

110. During my time at St. Mary's I did abscond a few times. Whenever I ran away I would get taken back and I'd be belted for running away. I don't know which Brothers belted me but I have the Brothers I've mentioned already in my head, so it might have been Brother ^{HLY} [REDACTED] ^{HLX} [REDACTED] or the Irish Brother ^{HLW} [REDACTED].

Abuse at St. Mary's

111. So much of what happened at St. Ninian's happened just the same at St. Mary's. There was beltings all the time. My memory of that place is just getting constantly belted for not doing what you're told. It wasn't the black pants there but it was a leather belt

across your backside. That could be for being cheeky or not doing what you've been told. I was belted many times at St. Mary's just like at St. Ninian's.

112. You could be walking along with a friend talking away with your hands in your pockets and the next thing you'd get a kick on the behind, which was the sorest thing you've probably felt or you could be punched with a clenched fist on the side of your head on the ear.
113. The names I'm thinking of for doing that kind of thing are Brother **HLY**, Brother **HLX** and Brother **HLW**. Irish Brother **HLW** used to take great delight in punching the boys.

Reporting of abuse at St. Mary's

114. I told my auntie **HLX** about St. Mary's because there was no point in telling my mum anymore as she didn't believe it. I had run away from St. Mary's and I went to stay with my auntie **HLX** for a couple of days. I told her about all the beltings. She then took me back and I remember her telling them, threatening them not to belt me for running away. She said that to the Brothers, I can't remember who, but as soon as she was gone I was belted. The names **HLY** and **HLX** are the names that still ring bells with me.

Leaving St. Mary's

115. I was never given a liberation date at St. Mary's, no one ever explained anything or told me what was going to be happening with me. All I knew is that there was an age limit and I don't think I could be there after I was fifteen.
116. It was about a week or so before I left that someone came and told me I was going home to stay with my mum. I would have been taken home but I don't remember that.

117. Once again things weren't any better and I got recalled back to approved school within a couple of weeks. The next place I went to was St. John's but I can't remember how that came about, how I got there or what happened there really.

St. John's Boys Approved School, Glasgow

118. St. John's was a De La Salle school again but it was a senior boys' approved school. That meant it was for boys who were older. I was about sixteen and I was only there for about a year. I remember there were big stormy winds that year, I'm sure it was 1968.
119. I was in the approved school for about two months then a job was found for me. I was going out working when I was there so it was a completely different set up. It was all about Training for Freedom or something like that. That was the reason we were all at St. John's.
120. I have absolutely nothing to say about St. John's, I can't complain about anything from the time I was there. I can't remember who the Brothers were at St. John's, Brother Stephen rings a bell, but as I've said, the Brothers moved about and it was confusing. There was also a Brother Martin here, who we called Mars Bars because he was always eating Mars Bars.

Routine at St. John's

121. I was up and away to work in the mornings. I was working just along the road at Broomhouse Brickworks when I was there, then coming back in at night time. I wasn't just a labourer, I was shown how the kilns worked and how to fire the bricks all that kind of stuff.
122. I was paying for my digs and money was being saved up for me from my wages for when I went home at weekends.

Leisure time

123. I remember they had a billiard table and a big swimming pool. I would come in from work, get showered and then go for a swim in the pool. It was a very relaxed place, you were trusted to go to your work and then come back.

Abuse at St. John's

124. I have heard that people have talked about abuse at St. John's but I can only say that in my time there I never saw any abuse there. I never got the belt once in the year I was there.

Leaving St. John's

125. About two weeks before I left St. John's one of the Brothers told me I could start getting my stuff together as I'd be going home in about two weeks.
126. I went home to [REDACTED] though, not my mum's. I was seventeen by then and I stayed with [REDACTED] for a few weeks. I was going about with my wife to be by then, she was only about fourteen at that time. We got married in 1972.
127. I ended up getting into trouble again when I was at [REDACTED] I can't remember what for, but I was then remanded to Longriggend.

Longriggend Detention Centre, Airdrie

128. I was at Longriggend about three times between the ages of seventeen and twenty. I would have been staying with my mum when I wasn't at Longriggend. Once you reached twenty one you couldn't stay there anymore and you had to go to Barlinnie.
129. It was single cells at Longriggend, there were no shared cells. I was always in the remand wing until I went to court. Twice I went to court I got off with it but there was one time I went to court and got done. I was then sent to Barlinnie until they got a place for me at Polmont.
130. I was only ever at Longriggend for a short time as I was on remand. It was a hell of a place and between there and St. Ninian's they were the two most brutal places I'd ever been in.

Routine at Longriggend

131. We got up in the morning and had to dust our cell and write a letter before we went down for breakfast in the dining hall. After breakfast you were back in your cell and you would maybe get an hour's recreation walking round the yard, depending on the weather. You were then back in your cell until tea time. After tea in the dining room you were back in your cell and they did come round with a supper at night, but that was you basically locked up in your cell until the next morning.
132. When you were in the cell, the doors were closed and you weren't allowed to lie on your bed. Some people would take a towel and lie on it on the table you had in the cell. You would hear the screws yelling 'Get off that table'. You basically just sat on your seat all day.

Leisure time

133. You had your hour outside when you were walking about but other than that there was nothing at Longriggend. I got Commando comics at my visits so I would sit in my cell and read my comics. I don't remember much other recreation. I don't know if you could refuse going out to walk about, I think you could and I think I did, because I couldn't be bothered.

Family Contact

134. I did get visits from family, that's when I got my comics. Sometimes if you were bad though, and you had something handed in for you at a visit you wouldn't get it. The screws wouldn't give it to you.

Discipline

135. There was a punishment at Longriggend and they called it the 'The Digger'. It was solitary confinement and I was sent there a couple of times. Once was because I went for a screw, Mr ^{HLS} [REDACTED] because I knew he was coming for me and another time it was for fighting with somebody.
136. You would go in front of the Governor and you'd be told you were getting seven days loss of remission, or whatever it was to be and they would take your sweets and things away from you as well, and you'd be sent away down to 'The Digger'. If you got a decent screw you might get a book but a lot of the time you would just be sitting for days in there and that was you. You would get out for the toilet but that was it. They would bring food to you but it was disgusting, I hardly ate the food.

Abuse at Longriggend

137. The screws were animals at Longriggend. There was a wee fat guy called Mr ^{HLV} [REDACTED] who was from Aberdeen, and he would beat you up. There was another one or two as

well that did the same. They would just come into your cell and beat you up. They called it a B.U, as in 'Beat Up', so they would say it's time for your B.U's then come in to your cell and beat you up.

138. The screws just liked having that power over you. That can go to a lot of people's heads and it certainly went to a lot of the screws heads at Longriggend.

139. The screws I remember are GUD [REDACTED] a Mr HEG [REDACTED] who we called HEG [REDACTED] because he had a big long face. A Mr HLT [REDACTED] who was an utter animal, [REDACTED] so we called him HLT [REDACTED]. They would all come into your cell and kick you or punch you, they didn't need a reason to be honest. HLT [REDACTED] once broke a guy's arm, I didn't see it happen but I remember seeing the boy with a stookie on afterwards.

140. HLT [REDACTED] did assault me though, he and another two screws once held me upside down and just kicked me again and again.

141. When I was in the remand wing these people would just come into the cell and kick me, punch me and slap me. It was never just one either, there would always be at least three of them.

142. I got into a tiff with a Mr HLS [REDACTED] at Longriggend once. We would get told to have our cell all done in the morning and then we would get a letter to write. You had to do all that before breakfast, so you had about an hour and a half. He came round this morning and I hadn't finished my letter and he was wanting to take it off me but I wouldn't give him it until I'd finished it. He said he would come back and see me about it later.

143. Next thing I could hear the footsteps coming along the corridor and I thought okay here we go. I knew I was getting a do-in and HLS [REDACTED] came in with other officers and gave me a beating. He kicked me and punched me along with the others, I can't remember the other mens' names. I lied down and curled up into a ball to protect my head so they could just kick my back and my ribs.

144. I don't remember ever getting any medical treatment for any injuries, but it wouldn't have been offered anyway. It would need to be a really serious injury to get medical treatment. I did ask to see a doctor once or twice, for black eyes and bruises and things like that, from the beatings. I asked the screws that had beaten me but they never ever got me a doctor.
145. It was a brutal regime and I did tell other people that they didn't want to be going to Longriggend because of that, but I gave up speaking to people about the beatings and things that happened to me. I certainly never reported anything to the police. It had a reputation for being a brutal place.

Polmont Young Offenders Institute (YOI), Polmont

146. I was only at Polmont for a couple of months I was sent there for a sort of assessment and then they decided I should go to a semi-open borstal so that was Noranside. I think I'd been done for reset while I was on probation, at Glasgow Sheriff Court.
147. I remember my probation officer was a Mr Ross Mathie. He actually wrote a report that said I had been in institutes for so long that I was now thoroughly institutionalised. Then they sent me to borstal after all that.
148. I must have been about eighteen when I was in Polmont. When I was there I was in an area they called the 'Ally Cally', which was just the name they gave to the allocation place you were assessed.

Abuse at Polmont

149. Polmont had a problem with 'B.U's' as well. There were a few screws who beat up the boys just the same as at Longriggend but I can't remember the names of staff at Polmont.

Noranside, Kirriemuir

150. I think I was moved to Noranside because I wasn't as serious an offender as some of the other boys that were in Polmont. There were bank robbers and attempt murderers in Polmont. I was at Noranside for about ten months.
151. Noranside was semi-open which meant that at night time you left all your doors open until they were ready to close it down for the night. You could wander about and visit other boys in their cells and talk and play music, things like that.
152. They also had what was called the Special Unit, which was for when you'd done so long at Noranside, about three months I think it was, and you were put to that unit and went out to work. Once they trusted you, you could go out and work, that was what it was all about there.
153. I was at Noranside and then I went to the unit and worked at this textile company called Bel-Ray. I would go back to the unit at night. Noranside took some of my pay as my digs money and they also put some money aside for me for when I left.
154. Noranside was alright and the officers were okay. There was a big one who we called Tom Jones, because he looked like him, who was decent and once warned me about drinking so there was no violence or abuse there, not that I saw.
155. We were even allowed to go out in Forfar at the weekends, so we could meet up with friends or family. We weren't supposed to go drinking at weekends but sometimes we did and as I said it would just be a wee warning, there wasn't abuse.
156. I left Noranside when I was about twenty one.

Life after being in care

157. I met my first wife in 1968, when she was only fourteen. We got married in 1972 and then we were divorced in 1981. I did stay close friends with her for a long time. I have a son who's fifty and two granddaughters, who are ten and fifteen.
158. I did get some jobs when I was out, all labouring, but I couldn't stand any of them. I just couldn't settle in to any and some of them were cracking jobs. I worked for the Maritime Museum as a tourist guide, which was a great job. That was for a total of about two years. That was in 1991, when I was forty, and I was the oldest student at the college because we had to go and do a course to learn about how to deal with people and things like that.
159. I then went on to work in The Big Idea which is a science centre near Irvine. I was a guide there for about nine months but the place didn't last. I did seasonal work for the council cutting grass and I also worked for the council as a supervisor at a traveller's site.
160. I also worked in pubs for about five years, I started off as a cellar man, then bar tender, assistant manager and finally manager of a pub. In 1996 I got a job as the night-watchman at the Forest Hills Hotel by Aberfoyle which I did for about a year and I did some work with my son doing roofing. I stopped working around 2000 or maybe 2001.
161. I'm now retired. I could do work and I've always thought about going in to volunteer work but because of my drinking I've given that idea up. I didn't want to not show up in the morning after drinking.

Impact

162. I'm frightened to read the papers nowadays, I've never read one in nearly twenty years. I'm scared to pick one up because of all the paedophile stories. I had to ask to be moved from a nice wee flat I was in because there was a school across the road.

It was school janitors that were getting the blame in the news for paedophilia and I just freaked and asked the council to get me out of there. I was all worried and didn't know who was going about. The council told me they couldn't move me but I told them they had to and I was eventually moved.

163. I was then put in a house where the previous occupier had been an internet sex offender and it was a safe house. I got a letter addressed to him and I knew his name and knew he'd been sentenced to five years for that. I had to go back to the council and tell them to get me out of there as well. If his mail was coming through the door, there could have been petrol bombs or something from people thinking he was still living there. It all made me very edgy.
164. I started drinking heavily many years ago. I was getting all these dreams and nightmares and I couldn't get to sleep unless I was drunk. The dreams and nightmares were always about the approved schools I was in, mainly St. Ninian's.
165. I hear the wee boy's voices crying 'mammie, mammie get me out of here, I promise I won't do it again,' and I think to myself how could a grown man do that to a wee child. I look at my wee ten year old granddaughter and I think how could anybody do anything like that.
166. I was drinking to blank it all out and I ended up in rehab twice. Once was in 1998 down at Ayr Hospital and I was there for six weeks. It helped me for a wee while but once it started to come back I was back at the pub.
167. It was the drinking that made me fall out with my wife. I do relate my drinking to what happened to me in care. It was burned in my mind and I just kept drinking and drinking and drinking. I know drink's not the answer but the way my head was I couldn't do anything else, I couldn't fight it.
168. In 2007 I tried to kill myself by [REDACTED]. St. Ninian's was doing my brain in, it frazzled my brain. For weeks a voice had been telling me [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and things like that and eventually I did it, [REDACTED]

169. I got steel plates in my jaw, nine stitches and I think I was in an induced coma for four days or something like that. When I came to, I didn't know what had happened or where I was. The doctors weren't wanting me to leave and they had me see a psychiatrist and a community worker. It was the community worker that told me I'd be sectioned if I didn't stay in, so I agreed and stayed on a couple more days for psychiatric assessments and things like that.
170. I had also been dealing with my wife having an affair behind my back with one of my supposed friends. I was really angry and so it was a difficult time for me and was another reason for me starting back on the drink.
171. I've taken drugs as well. Back in the seventies I took jellies, acid and Ecstasy, and the whacky baccy, I used to smoke a lot of that. I took a drugs overdose as well, just couple of years ago. I took [REDACTED] and woke up in the hospital and was so embarrassed. It was still the same idea, all the things going on in my head.
172. I was living in a homeless unit at that time and there was an older guy bouncing a wee girl on his knee, singing her a song. I told the staff the wee girl was nothing to do with him as I knew her and her mother who was a heroin addict. The staff dealt with it but that reminded me of when I was younger and I got really angry. I felt I wanted to hit the guy.
173. I don't like the smell of food and I don't really get any pleasure from eating. I maybe feel I want something to eat but as soon as certain smells come along I get scared and flustered. I had to leave my son's house one Christmas morning about eighteen years ago. I stayed overnight on Christmas Eve but when I got up in the morning and was eating breakfast, the smell off all the food being cooked got to me. My son noticed and asked if I was okay but I had to leave as I was remembering the food being forced down my throat at St. Ninian's.
174. It makes me scared to even try food. I've not eaten seafood or poultry since 1961 and I'm not a vegetables man. I just live on snacks. It affected my wife as well because I

wasn't able to take her out to restaurants or go to friends' houses for meals, things like that. I'd make her go out with friends as I couldn't be there. She was always wanting me to go but I just couldn't do that kind of thing.

175. I'd maybe have mince and tatties or basic stuff at home but never chicken and fish because of the wee bones that were in them when they were forcing it down my throat in care. Boiled liver was the other one it's like eating leather.

176. When I went into care as a ten year old I was meeting people who had broken into houses and done other things, that I hadn't done. I was getting told by other lads about the tonne of money they were getting and things like that and I was enthralled by all that. That made me start breaking into shops. If I hadn't mixed with all those boys in care, I would have been a different person.

177. I'm not unintelligent but I still think I would have gone on to get certificates and qualifications, but when you're in the places I was in you don't get to do things like that. I didn't get to sit O-Levels or any exams like that, I just don't think they were available to me, it wasn't in their mission statement or whatever they call it.

178. There's no doubt that lack of education has held me back because I do love to learn and to research. I wanted to be a researcher but that never happened.

179.



180. I feel I had Catholicism kicked into me but I got it kicked out even quicker. When I used to tell my mother what was happening she would always tell me that priests didn't do that. I would tell her they did but she just wouldn't believe it. She used to get a visit from the parish priest on a Wednesday and she'd get a parcel or something yet she was a pretend Roman Catholic, she was never at the chapel in her life.

Treatment/support

181. I've seen professional people for treatment over the years, I saw many when I was in the hospital after I tried to take my own life. I also went to the doctor about my eating habits a long time ago. I got supplement drinks.
182. I've not had actual counselling though, about overcoming the fears I had from my time in the approved schools, nothing like that. I can't seem to get into anything like that.

Reporting of Abuse

183. I told my mum at the time but she never believed a thing. When I was living in Saltcoats I went into the police station there and reported things. It was around 2004 and spoke to a sergeant about everything I've spoken about with the Inquiry, all the abuse, everything. I'm sure they actually approached me as they knew I had been at St. Ninian's. I wouldn't have gone in myself I know that.
184. The name Kenneth McAlpine rings a bell as the police sergeant I spoke to. I gave him a statement and I never heard from him or the police ever again. I went back a few years after to get a record about my statement for my lawyer, and the police had no record of me providing a statement at all.

Records

185. I don't have any records from my time in care. My previous convictions confirm the dates I was in care but I don't have anything else.

Lessons to be Learned

- 186. People need to listen to children when they tell them about what's happening with them when they're in care. Children don't tell lies a lot, and more or less always tell the truth. I could write a book about what I've told my mum and it would be called 'Priests Don't Do That'. My mum never listened to me about all the things I told her.

- 187. They have child welfare and things like that now, that's a good thing because they need to have these things in place. They have to get the best people to do these jobs and the organisations responsible need to have a mission statement telling everyone this is how we do it. The carers of children need to be honest and better trained.

- 188. I think having a group of people for the children to speak to would be a good thing. People that are independent and would listen and do things when children tell them about abuse. They need to have laws to stop people getting away with these things.

- 189. I think about my time in care quite a lot and what annoys me is when I think how could a grown up person do those things to a child. It's beyond me.

- 190. 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... 21/7/2022