

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GPD

Support person present: No

1. My name is GPD I am known as GPD My date of birth is 1953. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My mother was called and my father was They are both dead now. I have a brother, who is about six years older than me, and there was also who was four years older. died through alcohol a few years ago.
3. I don't have many memories of life at home, but I do remember staying somewhere on in Edinburgh with my brothers, my dad and his mother. My granny was the one who looked after me. I've since obtained some of my records and found out that my mum was from Keighley and that my parents met there while my dad was a serving soldier. When dad left the army they moved to Edinburgh where he got a job as a fireman with the city council and my brothers and I were later born.
4. My records also say that my parents split up not long after I was born and my mother took my brothers and me to County Durham where we all lived in a caravan. After a while my brothers and I were taken into the care of the local authority and put into a foster home in County Durham, but I've no memory of that. The records continue to say that when I was two my dad took my brothers and me out of foster care and moved us back up to Edinburgh.

5. I went to Hyvots Bank School and I started getting into a bit of trouble. Eventually I was taken into care. I don't remember anyone from the social work being involved, but the police certainly were. It says in my records that I was charged for assault and robbery before I was taken into care, but I can't remember that, although I do remember stealing and being taken to court. I was stopped by the police on Liberton Road and ran away, but eventually I got caught and everything started from there.

6. There is a social background report my records that was completed by a probation officer for that court appearance. It says that I appeared at Edinburgh Sheriff Juvenile Court on [REDACTED] 1966 and that I was sentenced to be put in care on [REDACTED] 1966. There is no mention of how long I would be in care and I have no recollection of being told how long it would be.

7. I was twelve years old at that time and I was put into a home in the Oxgangs area of Edinburgh, that I think was called Redhall. [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later
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8. I'm not sure how long I was in there, possibly just a few weeks, before I was taken to Dr Guthrie's, which was also in Edinburgh.

Dr Guthrie's Boys School, Edinburgh

9. Dr Guthrie's Boys School was in a big stone-built building in its own grounds on Lasswade Road at Liberton, Edinburgh. Inside there were four dormitories upstairs, one called Argyll and another called Newhaven. I can't remember what the others were called. There was also a swimming pool inside and outside there was a square where we used to play.

10. Mr [REDACTED]^{GZP} was [REDACTED]^{SNR}, although I never saw much of him. [REDACTED]^{SNR} was a guy called Mr [REDACTED]^{GII}, I think. He was a small man in his fifties and was balding and wore glasses. I'd heard that he used to be a bareknuckle fighter. I would say there were maybe ten staff in total who were all men except for one lady who came in

to teach. Amongst the rest of the staff I remember a man called Mr GHZ who was a bit more approachable than the others. They were all pretty strict.

11. I would estimate there were between eighty and a hundred boys at Dr Guthrie's, perhaps there could have been more. I think the youngest would have been about twelve and the oldest about fourteen.

Routine at Dr Guthrie's

First day

12. I don't remember anything about being taken to Dr Guthrie's and, as far as I remember, nobody told me why I was being moved from Redhall. Whether Redhall was just to have been a temporary placement, or whether I was moved because they couldn't handle me, I don't know. There is certainly mention in my records of behavioural problems.

Mornings and bedtime

13. I think there were between ten and twenty boys in each of the four dormitories. We were woken early in the morning and had to get washed at the sinks before we got dressed and went downstairs to the canteen for breakfast. At the side of our beds we all had a wee unit where we kept our clothes.
14. After breakfast we went outside to the square to play, I don't remember being at school in the morning. After lunch we were back out on the square and then we went in for school. I don't remember having any chores to do at any time.
15. In the evening it was lights out about 8:00 pm and staff used to patrol about telling whoever might have been making a noise to be quiet.

Bed Wetting

16. I'm not sure what happened if a boy wet their bed. I could have done it myself, I don't recall. I think boys who wet their bed had a rubber sheet, but I don't remember what happened to them. I have no recollection of any boy being punished for wetting their bed.

Mealtimes/Food

17. We all ate together in the canteen and the food was alright. There was enough of it and everyone ate it all, but we did have to eat it quickly. Breakfast was usually porridge and later there might be mince and tatties. We also got jam sponge occasionally.

Washing/bathing

18. There were eight showers next to the dormitories and we all had to have a shower every night. In the morning we'd just wash ourselves at the sink.

Clothing/uniform

19. We all wore the same clothes, which were thick corduroy shorts, a shirt and a jacket. Dr Guthrie's provided everything and it all got washed once a week. I recall that there was a big cupboard where clothes were put on a rail on wheels and it was then pushed back in for everything to dry.

Leisure time

20. Most of our leisure time was spent in the square, where everybody would be standing about chatting. Some boys used to do some skating and everyone was in little groups. I don't remember any free time at night and I don't think there was a TV.
21. I do remember playing football on a Sunday and now and again at other times. One time I managed to score a goal from the halfway line. One of the staff, Mr GHZ, was an ex-footballer and I thought he was a good man. There was another member of staff involved with the football too and he was okay as well.

22. Those two staff put my name and another two boys' names forward to train with either Heart of Midlothian or Hibernian. I went a few times, but nothing came of it. One of the other two was really good at dribbling and I thought he'd become a professional footballer, but I don't know if he did.
23. We also went swimming twice a week in the pool at Dr Guthrie's, but there wasn't much else. We were never taken to the cinema or anything like that.

Schooling

24. We had some school in the afternoon, but there wasn't much. There might have been school in the morning as well, but I don't recall. There would be fifteen or twenty boys in the classroom and we were taught in a room upstairs by a lady teacher who was brought in. I always used to sit right at the back and I never learned much.

Healthcare

25. There is reference in my records to something about a doctor, but I can't read it and I don't recall seeing a doctor or a dentist at any time.

Religious instruction

26. Religion wasn't a big thing at Dr Guthrie's. I don't even remember going to church on a Sunday.

Trips and holidays

27. I remember we went camping in big brown army tents for two or three weeks in a field near the beach where Torness Nuclear plant is now. I remember walking to Dunbar and picking shells up on the beach while we were there.

28. Another time we went to Forfar, where we stayed in what would now be called a log cabin. There were maybe about eight boys there for two or three days and we spent most of the time walking in the hills. I remember finding antlers and being shown how things are made out of them, which was quite interesting.

Birthdays and Christmas

29. Birthdays weren't celebrated at all and when Christmas came some people used to go home, but I never did and nor did a few of the other boys. I don't remember if there was anything special done by the staff at Christmas, I don't even remember if there was a Christmas tree.

Visitors

30. I had no visits from any social worker or official of any sort and I don't remember anyone coming to see other boys either. I don't remember anyone from outside coming to inspect the place at any time either.

Family contact

31. The only one of my family that came to see me at Dr Guthrie's was my older brother [REDACTED]. He had joined the army and I think he was probably about to go to Germany. I would say he came after I had been at Dr Guthrie's for about a month and I remember standing talking to him at the door for a short time before he left. There was a member of staff standing with us and [REDACTED] just told me to look after myself and then went away and that was the last time I saw him.

Discipline

32. It was a very strict regime at Dr Guthrie's. We were shouted at a lot and we had to stick to a lot of rules. If we had finished a meal, for example, we had to sit with our arms crossed and stare straight ahead until we were told we could leave the table.

Running away

33. Early one morning ten or fifteen boys, including me, ran away from Dr Guthrie's. We slid down a fire escape pole from the dormitories and we all scattered. A lot of the other boys were caught fairly quickly, but three or four of us stayed out all night. Later on the next day we were caught by the police and taken back.

Abuse at Dr Guthrie's

34. There was always a member of staff watching us when we showered and when we went swimming. The staff made us swim in the nude, we never wore trunks. The boys were all the same age group, but during the winter they also told us to go outside and roll in the snow in the field with no clothes on before going into the pool. I can't remember the staffs' names, but there were a couple of them.
35. The staff who watched us varied depending on their shifts and I suppose I didn't think much of it at the time, you just did what you were told. Looking back though, I think that was a bit weird. I think there was maybe something sexual about it.
36. At that time we used to get the belt at school and I got it a couple of times at Dr Guthrie's, however that wasn't the worst punishment. One time I got in trouble for something and Mr GII, SNR of Dr Guthrie's, punished me for it. He told me to clench my fist and hold it out and when I did, he brought his clenched fist down on mine. He hit me very hard with his knuckles and it was painful. He did that on three separate occasions during my time at Dr Guthrie's, including after I'd run away.

Reporting of abuse at Dr Guthrie's

37. I never reported anything that happened to me at Dr Guthrie's to anyone. There was nobody that I could have spoken to anyway.

Leaving Dr Guthrie's

38. I know from my records that I was moved from Dr Guthrie's to Geilsland School in Beith, Ayrshire on [REDACTED] 1968. I don't know why I was moved, the staff never told me, but I would have been fourteen by then, so it was perhaps my age.
39. All I remember of leaving Dr Guthrie's is being told to pack my stuff and heading off in a car that was waiting outside. It was only me that was taken and the car was driven by one of the staff from Dr Guthrie's, straight up to Beith.

Geilsland School, Beith, Ayrshire

40. Geilsland was set in its own grounds on the outskirts of Beith in Ayrshire. There was an old building with two or three dorms in it and another, newer building with other dormitories. Outside were gardens where we used to work.
41. [REDACTED] SNR of Geilsland was a guy called [REDACTED] EZD who was a bald, cherry-faced man in his 50s. He was [REDACTED] SNR and he wanted everyone to know that. I think he wanted everyone to be scared of him. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
42. Amongst the other staff there was a Mr [REDACTED] HFA but I can't remember any of the names of the others. They were all men, except, if I can remember right, a female secretary.
43. There were possibly about sixty boys at Geilsland, ranging in age from about fourteen to sixteen. There were no girls.

Routine at Geilsland School

First day

44. When I arrived I was told what I had to do and what I wasn't allowed to do by one of the staff. It quickly became clear that discipline at Geilsland was going to be even worse than it had been at Dr Guthrie's.

Mornings and bedtime

45. The daily routine at Geilsland was a bit harsher than at Dr Guthrie's. Everything had to be done quickly, at double-time. I think there were seven boys in my dormitory and we all had to move quickly to get washed and dressed before breakfast. There was a wardrobe in our dormitory where we kept our clothes and everything had to be neat and tidy. One of the staff would come round occasionally, often on a Sunday, to check everything was hanging right and had been pressed properly.
46. As soon as we'd had breakfast, at 8:30 am or 09:00 am, we'd all have to start our work. As far as I can remember, we worked all day and finished about 6:00 pm, when we went for dinner. I don't remember having much free time and we were always in bed early. I suppose there would have been a member of staff on duty overnight, but I don't recall.

Mealtimes/Food

47. All the boys ate together and went up and helped themselves. The food was alright at Geilsland and it wasn't as bad as it had been at Dr Guthrie's in that we didn't all have to sit with our arms crossed when we'd finished.

Washing/bathing

48. There were two, or maybe three showers, that we all had to queue up to use on a Sunday morning before church. SNR [REDACTED] EZD [REDACTED] would be supervising

us and the showers were always cold. On other days we washed at the sink, even though we might have been doing work outside and getting dirty.

Clothing/uniform

49. All our clothing was provided by Geilsland. We all wore beige trousers and a light blue shirt in the evening and we all had a suit for church on a Sunday.

Leisure time

50. I don't remember playing cards or having any toys to play with or books to read if we had wanted. I don't remember having much in the way of free time at all either, even at the weekend. There weren't even any organised football matches, or anything like that.

Schooling/work

51. As at Dr Guthrie's, there wasn't much schooling at Geilsland either, it was more work. There was a lot of strict manual labour. Some boys did mechanical work in the workshops, some did bricklaying, but I wasn't into that and so I worked in the garden. I'm not sure of the name of the member of staff who supervised us, but like with everything else, we all had to do everything quickly. As an example, a tree might have been chopped down in the grounds and we were expected to run with a barrow of logs, not walk with it.
52. We were given all sorts of jobs to do in the grounds and in the fields. I might be told to weed a particular patch and there was also a greenhouse where I would pot up plants. I also dug trenches for drains and that was quite physical.
53. Later on I did a bit of 'out-working' at a farm nearby for a couple of months. I went on my own and used to get up about 05:00 am to catch a bus and then walk up the hill to the farm. I was there all day from early in the morning until late in the afternoon and

used to do the milking and other chores around the farm. I did get paid something for it, but I don't remember how much.

54. Everything in the home had to be immaculate and, as well as our various jobs, we had to clean every day. There would normally be an inspection on a Sunday and we had to iron our trousers, shirts and our underpants in a certain way so that there were creases in just the right places.
55. I went to a training school for the Merchant Navy before I left Geilsland. The school was on a boat called 'The Dolphin', which was berthed at Leith in Edinburgh. Everything was going alright there until, after about seventeen weeks, I got into a bit of trouble and had to leave. I think it had got to the stage where I was going to get on a boat, but that never happened and instead I got sent back to Geilsland.

Healthcare

56. I never saw a doctor or a dentist while I was at Geilsland and I don't know of any other boy who did.

Religious instruction

57. We had to say 'Grace' before meals and church on Sunday was a big thing. We all had to wear our suits and tie and then line up for inspection by **EZD** **SNR** **SNR**. If he was away doing something else, **HFA** might do it, but it was usually **EZD**. If our kit wasn't up to scratch we would be told how useless we were and have to get it right for the next time. I don't recall any physical punishment for that.
58. After the inspection we all walked down to church in the village. There might have been boys of different religions there, but we all had to go to the Church of Scotland, there was no choice.

Trips and holidays

59. The only trip I can remember being taken on was to some show that some of the other boys were putting on in Glasgow. I wasn't involved in it and I don't remember much about it, other than the boys were dressed up as skeletons. There was nothing else though, no other trips and no holidays or anything like that.

Birthdays and Christmas

60. I don't think birthdays were celebrated at all, but Christmas was. On Christmas morning we would be given an orange and a pair of gloves, or something like that. It was appreciated, but that was about all we got. We probably got a Christmas dinner too, but I don't remember.
61. I kept all my kit spot on, so I was told I could go home one Christmas. I had nowhere to go though, so that was a waste of time. After that, some of the other boys were told they also could go home and some of them did.

Personal possessions/Pocket money

62. We had nothing we could call our own, although we did have a bank book for the money we were given for the work we were doing. One weekend I went down to the village with my bank book and spent some of my money and I got into a bit of trouble, because we weren't supposed to do that.
63. There was a tuck shop where we could buy sweets and things like that. We could go and buy something whenever we wanted and, because I was up early to go and work on the farm, sometimes I used to help myself to a few sweets before I left when nobody was about.

Visitors

64. I never had any visitors, even my family and there were no phone calls or letters written home. I never even saw a social worker or any other official while I was at Geilsland.

I suppose they were maybe talking about you behind the scenes, but certainly nobody spoke to me or asked me how I was getting on.

Discipline

65. Discipline at Geilsland was even worse than it had been at Dr Guthrie's. It was almost run like a military regime, with all the staff shouting at us all the time. There was never any praise for what we were doing and, especially when we lined up for inspection on a Sunday morning, we'd be standing quivering in our boots in case our kit wasn't up to scratch.

Running away

66. I never ran away from Geilsland and I don't remember any other boy doing so either. I think I would have known if someone did, but I don't know what would have happened if someone had.

Abuse at Geilsland School

67. On a Sunday morning, before we went to church, we all had to have a cold shower. We all had to stay in the shower with SNR [REDACTED] EZD [REDACTED] watching us and he wouldn't allow us out until we sang a song. Like at Dr Guthrie's, I'm not sure now if there was something sexual in Mr EZD [REDACTED] watching us.
68. I got into trouble a few times and the punishment was the belt on your bare bottom by EZD [REDACTED] in his office. I probably got that punishment about five times, for different things, like for stealing something out of the tuck shop.
69. Sometimes I was in on my own, but sometimes there might be a few other boys in Mr EZD [REDACTED] office for punishment and we'd all be told to drop our pants and be given six of the best. I'm not sure if there was something in the belt to weight it so that he could get a better swing, but he hit us with force. You'd be black and blue, blistered and bleeding from the cuts afterwards.

70. When I got into trouble at the Merchant Navy training school, Mr ^{EZD} picked me up and took me to Geilsland where he put me in a cell for the night. There was a window with bars over it and I think I had a pot for the toilet and I was locked in for the duration.

Reporting of abuse at Geilsland School

71. I never reported anything about Geilsland to anybody. I suppose I just accepted what happened was normal. It's only now, as I look back, that I know things like the cold showers with ^{EZD} watching us and getting the belt from him on the bare backside were wrong.

Leaving Geilsland School

72. I left Geilsland around 1970, when I was fifteen or sixteen, but there was no preparation for me leaving. I hadn't been taught anything about how to live or things like that. I went back to Edinburgh and I stayed in the Seamen's Mission at first and I got a job as a porter.

Life after being in care

73. The cook at the Seamen's Mission was called Mrs and she was a nice woman. She became more like a mother to me and I ended up staying with her, but her two brothers were real criminals and I got in a bit of trouble with them. As a result, I ended up in Glenochil prison for two sharp, quick months when I was eighteen.
74. Glenochil was a bit of a shock to my system and when I got out I started as a scaffolding labourer. It was hard work, but I really got into it. I was all over Edinburgh putting up scaffolding before, when I was about twenty, I got a job in Grimsby through a friend of a friend who was a scaffolding supervisor there.
75. In Grimsby I was helping put up scaffold for building an oil refinery and I was therefore away from Edinburgh and away from Mrs's brothers. Things started to improve,

people started to show me a bit of respect and eventually I met my wife [REDACTED], who is from Lincoln.

76. [REDACTED] and I have now been married for thirty-odd years and we have two sons together. I worked as a scaffolder offshore and abroad, including in Russia and Egypt. After a while I became a supervisor and I earned a reasonable amount of money over the years and eventually I retired after about forty years in the business.

Impact

77. I don't have nightmares or flashbacks to my time in care, but it is always there. When I look back at Dr Guthrie's and at Geilsland, I don't mind the discipline so much, it's the brutality that was so terrible and it's that which still bothers me. I suppose when I left Geilsland I had withdrawn into myself. I'm not sure if I was scared of people or perhaps it was because I couldn't trust anyone and I think I probably rebelled a bit more than I might have if I hadn't been there.
78. My wife told me fairly recently that I seemed quite insecure when we met. She said that I used to follow her about all the time and that I drank heavily. She also says that I have always been mistrusting of people, especially those newly met, and I think that must have been because of the way we were treated in the schools. That only started to change when I started working and went offshore and people started to give me praise, acknowledgement and respect.
79. Offshore there was a real sense of comradeship with the men I worked with, but there had been nothing like that amongst the boys at Dr Guthrie's or Geilsland. It was 'survival of the fittest' there and I think when I left I still behaved like that for a while.
80. When I left Geilsland my reading, writing and spelling was very poor. I've tried to teach myself over the years, but even to this day it's not good.

81. I have never punished my two children the way I was at Dr Guthrie's or Geilsland. My sons have done well for themselves, one has a PhD and I wonder what I might have been able to achieve if I'd grown up the way they had.
82. I totally lost contact with my brothers and the rest of my family when I went into Dr Guthrie's and I never saw [REDACTED] again. It is only recently that I have managed to contact [REDACTED], after he last saw me at the door to Dr Guthrie's.
83. A few weeks ago I decided to take my wife up to Edinburgh to show her Dr Guthrie's. It's completely changed now, but when I saw the door it took me right back to the last time I saw my brother [REDACTED]. That upsets me even now.

Treatment/support

84. I've never spoken about my time at Dr Guthrie's or Geilsland to anybody. It's only in the last year that I've told my wife [REDACTED] a few things, but not about the bad things.

Records

85. I applied through Birthlink to get my records and it was through them that I got some from Dr Guthrie's and from the courts. I don't have anything from Geilsland though. Apparently they are updating their systems and can't give me anything at the moment.
86. The lady from Birthlink has managed to find my brother [REDACTED], who is still living in Germany. I wrote a letter to introduce myself to him, just to see if we could have some contact again and he wrote back a short time later. In his letter he writes that he did try and visit me at Dr Guthrie's when he was on leave from the army, but was told that visits from relatives were 'discouraged'. Since he wrote I have been over to visit him in Germany and we have kept in contact.

Lessons to be learned

- 87. I know that there needs to be discipline in the lives of children, but not to the extent I experienced. I think there could have been more praise for us boys at Dr Guthrie's and at Geilsland. They could have maybe tried to make sure that we felt we were wanted and loved. Instead it was all very strict and there was no recognition that a child in care might need more help than other children.

- 88. There needs to be more training of staff. They should be put through different scenarios of what they might face dealing with children, so that they can maybe foresee any problems there might be and know how to deal with them. They should do more activities with the children, try and get them interested in things.

Other information

- 89. While I was in Edinburgh showing my wife Dr Guthrie's I saw reports in the media about the place. There was mention of boys swimming naked in the pool and it took me right back. It was that which made me contact the Inquiry.

- 90. I've had nothing to do with my parents. I've never even heard anything of them, other than I do know that they are both now dead. I did see my dad once when I was working as a scaffolder in Edinburgh and told him I would meet him in a pub once I'd finished. He never turned up though, so I left it at that.

- 91. 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.

GPD


Signed.....

Dated... 21 07 2022