# **Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

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we were always starving.

Witness Statement of
HSJ
Support person present: No
My name is HSJ. My date of birth is 1955. My details are known to The Inquiry.
Life before going into care
I was born in Rhu and at the time my family were living in Clydebank. I have four brothers and a sister. It is about 80 now, 175, 187 is 72, 187 is 71 this year, then it's me and then my brother who will be 62 this year. My parents were and 187 My father was in the Royal Navy then joined the Merchant Navy and was away from home a lot, sometimes up to three years at a time. Mum worked at shipyard but was an alcoholic.
Life wasn't good at home and my older brothers were always picking on me. I was usually saddled with looking after my young brother, HRD. My brother was supposed to look after me and but he never did. My mum struggled to look after us all because of her work and drinking problems.
I started school at Our Holy Redeemer's in Clydebank but ended up missing a lot because I was always being bullied. I was there on and off till I was eleven then went to secondary school at St Columba's, also in Clydebank.
In the mid-60s it was mainly just me, mum and HRD in the house as my dad was working away and my older brothers and sister had moved out. I was running away a lot

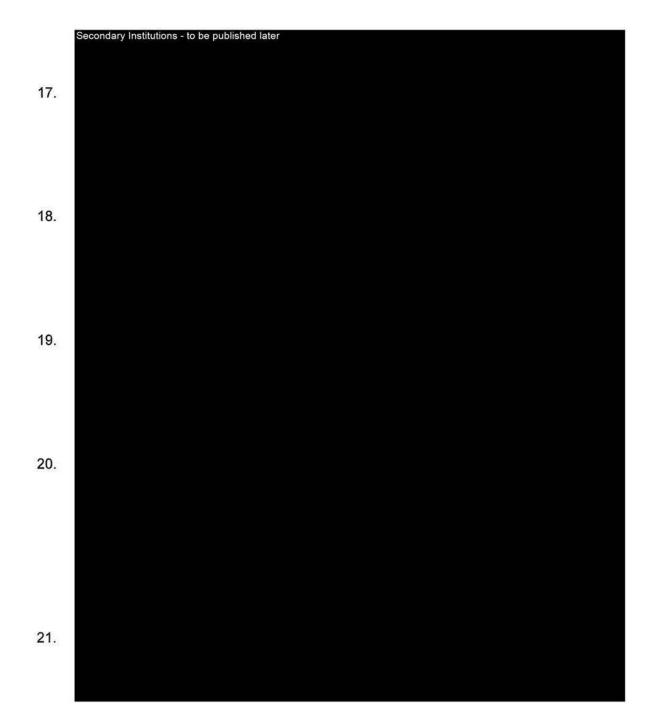
because of the bullying and the fact that there was no food in the house which meant

- 6. Shipyard lost a contract and my mum and older brothers lost their jobs there. This made things even worse and I started running away more often. I reported to the police that I was being bullied at school. Because of this and the fact that I was missing school I was put into Ardgare Children's Home in Helensburgh though I think I was also put there to give my mum some respite.
- 7. I was seven or eight years old when I first went into Ardgare and between that age and by the time I was seventeen or eighteen I ended up in a number of places. In chronological order, I was in the following places:-
- Ardgare (1963 for ten days); Cardross (1966 for two weeks); Ardgare again (1967 for two weeks); Bellfield (1967 for ten weeks); Cardross again for assessment (1968 for two weeks); St Joseph's Tranent (1968 for six weeks); St Ninian's (1968 to 1969); and finally Polmont about 1972.

Ardgare Children's Home, Helensburgh (1963 – ten days and 1967 – two weeks)



	Secondary Institutions - to be published later
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# Leaving Ardgare Children's Home, Helensburgh

25. The first time I left Ardgare was in 1963 having been there for about ten days. The second time was in 1967 and I had been in for about two weeks. On both occasions I went home. Life was still hard at home and me and my young brother were sent to live with my granny in Northern Ireland for three months in 1966.

## Cardross Assessment Centre (1966 – two weeks and 1967 – two weeks)

26. In 1966 I was sent to Cardross assessment centre and was there for two weeks. I think that it was again for skipping school though my brother HRD was there with me so it might have been to give my mum some respite. The place was set back from the road and had a lot of rhododendrons. The only member of staff I recall was Mr Davidson who lived

27. It was all boys aged from about five up to fifteen and two of those I recall were and and and were locked in the dorm at night.

#### **Routine at Cardross Assessment Centre**

28. We would get up about 7:00 am then get washed and dressed then go for breakfast. After breakfast we worked all day in the garden pulling up the weeds regardless of the weather. Schooling was basic if we got any at all. All I recall is digging roots all day. I think on a Saturday we got about an hour to play games. The food was basic but I don't recall much about it.

Clothes

29. We wore sandshoes with no socks and trousers with no underpants. We were also issued with thin shirts. We were never given a pullover or coat and it was freezing.

Running away

30. Nobody ran away when I was there though it was all people seemed to talk about.

**Visits** 

31. My mum would visit us on a Sunday and me and my brother HRD would meet with her in the parlour. We were never alone with her and there was always somebody listening. No social workers or anybody like that ever came to see me. I have no recollection of being assessed during either of my times in Cardross.

#### **Abuse at Cardross Assessment Centre**

32. There was a lot of bullying at Cardross and you would get battered with sets of keys if you stepped out of line. Somebody would be getting hit every day and you daren't step out of line. If it happened to you you didn't dare complain.

- 33. You would also get hit with a leather belt, especially by Mr Davidson though that didn't happen to me. You always had to try and keep your head down and not get noticed. If you got caught bullying or stealing you got beat up and you lost your privileges for a week.
- 34. There was one occasion when one of the boys got pushed down the metal stairs of the fire-exit. Four of us were smoking at the door when somebody, I don't know who, suddenly pushed one of the others down the stairs. That happened during my first time in Cardross.

## **Leaving Cardross Assessment Centre**

- 35. The first time I left Cardross I went home but the second time I left I was sent to St Joseph's in Tranent. That was in 1968.
- In 1967 I was skipping school again and the children's panel sent me to Bellfield in Dumbarton where I stayed for about ten weeks.

## Bellfield Remand Home for boys, Dumbarton

- 37. Bellfield was set back from the road and the entry for us was at the back. It was a big old Victorian house and had cells in the basement. All the doors were kept locked and they had small windows in them.
- 38. We slept three or four to a dorm and the ages went from eight or nine up to about fourteen, all boys. I can't remember any of the staff other than the night watchman who was like a prison guard. During the day you were locked in unless you were working or at school.

Routine

- 39. We would get up at about 6 am being woken by the night watchman then we would get washed and dressed and go for breakfast. After breakfast we would go to school where we would have a fifteen minute break in the morning during which we could have a cigarette. It was in Bellfield that I started smoking.
- 40. After lunch we would play games for a while in the common room before going back to school in the afternoon. After tea we would be back in the common room before supper then bed at about 8:30 pm.

Food

41. The food was alright. For breakfast we would get porridge or cereal though on a Sunday you got a sausage or bacon. Lunch was usually soup and a sandwich. The way I looked at it was that at least I was getting fed.

Chores

42. I washed floors in the main hall after breakfast which got me some pocket money which I could use to buy cigarettes. On Saturdays we were outside sweeping leaves and cleaning up. Some of the older boys would be out in other places bricklaying and labouring and I didn't see much of them.

School

43. School was on the grounds and we were all in the same class. I don't remember the teacher's name but he was a good guy and a good teacher. We all liked him. I enjoyed it.

Health care

44. We were examined when we arrived but that was the only time I saw medical staff.

**Visits** 

45. Visitors came on a Sunday. Others got visits but nobody ever came to see me.

Recreation

- 46. We weren't allowed outside and there were no trips but we could play board games.
  There was no physical exercise.
- 47. If you got caught fighting you were put in a cell for the day though that never happened to me. The place wasn't great but it was warm and we were getting fed.
- 48. When I left Bellfield I went home but in 1968 I appeared in front of a children's panel and they sent me back to Cardross Assessment Centre. The only reason I went there was because there wasn't a place for me but after two weeks I went back to the children's panel and they sent me to St Joseph's in Tranent.

# St Joseph's, Tranent

- 49. I went to St Joseph's when I was about twelve years old. I don't know who took me there but I recall we went by car along with another boy called we were met by one of the Brothers though I don't recall which one.
- 50. St Joseph's was a big school and was run by the De La Salle Brothers along with civilian staff though I don't remember any of their names. It was an all-boys school and they were aged from eight to sixteen.
- 51. We were split into four houses called St George's, De La Salle, St Patrick's and St Columba's. I think I was in St George's. The place was run like a concentration camp though we could get out to play after school and there was a lot of space.

52. We slept in single beds with six boys to each dorm. You were locked in at night but if you needed the toilet you would bang the door and the night watchman would let you out.

Routine

- 53. We were woken up at 6:00 am by the night watchman then we would get washed and dressed before going for breakfast. After breakfast we did our chores then went to school which was on site. At lunchtime we walked to the dining room for lunch followed by twenty minutes playing outside.
- 54. After school we would be out in the fields playing football or whatever.

Washing

55. In the morning we used the big old fashioned sinks to get washed and there were also communal showers that we could use once a week. The water was never much above freezing.

Food

56. For breakfast we would get porridge or cornflakes though on a Sunday we would get a sausage, a bit of bacon or a boiled egg. There was always plenty of bread and butter. As with other places we were getting fed which we didn't get at home.

School

57. School was on site. It was mainly the Brothers who taught us and I think there was only one civilian teacher who taught geography. School was alright though the Brothers had a tendency of hitting us on the back of the head or poking us with a pointer if they thought we were stepping out of line. That really hurt.

#### Recreation

58. There was plenty of physical exercise and we did things like playing football, rugby, cricket and running. There were also organised tournaments between the various houses.

Trips

- 59. We went to the pictures in Tranent which was great as I had never been to the pictures before. It was the Brothers who took us.
- 60. Some of the boys went home at the weekends but during my time there I only got to go home once. During that weekend me and my mum visited my brother who was in Cardross. The staff there were not happy to see me especially as I was wearing the St Joseph's uniform. They told me not to come back.
- 61. During that same weekend, on the Friday night, my mum went out to the pub so I was left on my own. I met up with my friend on the Saturday morning and we went down to the shops at Glasgow Rd. started climbing because he was looking for bird's eggs. He fell, but I managed to catch him and as we went to leave we were grabbed and taken to Clydebank Police Office being accused of breaking into shops which was nonsense.
- Due to the fact that the cells in the police office were full me and were taken to Barlinnie. I remember it clear as day as we were put in D hall and I remember having to scrub the floors. On the Sunday we were taken back to Clydebank Police Office and from there I was taken back to St Joseph's. The two police officers involved with me were, I think, McKinley and Robson.
- 63. Some of the Brothers in St Joseph's were good to us and would do things like teach us how to play musical instruments but others weren't so nice and would hit out at us for things like swearing, stealing sweets or not doing a job properly.

# Leaving St Joseph's Tranent

think that was why I went to St Ninian's.

along with	. Brother PAF	was one of those who took us but I don't recall		
the name of the other Brother. I do remember we went in a Morris Minor. Although I				
wasn't given an e	xplanation,	was getting moved because his cousin was in St		
Ninian's.				

However, my brother HRD was in St Ninian's and apparently he wasn't eating and I

### St Ninian's

65.

- St Ninian's was a big private house that looked like Argyll Castle. It was a beautiful place with about fifteen acres of grounds. Brother GSU, I think that's how his name is spelt, was SNR and was a good guy. Two of the other Brothers were Brother and Brother Benedict and they were brutal.
- 67. There were Brothers and civilian staff and Mr McKinstry was the night watchman.

  There was also Mr McKenna and Mr McKinstry was the night watchman.
- 68. When we arrived we were taken straight to where we got our kit of uniform, sheets, shoes and were each allocated a locker and a number. I think I was number.
- 69. It was another all-boy school with boys aged between five and sixteen. I seem to recall that the two five year olds were called and and Market. My brother HRD was already in St Ninian's when I arrived.
- 70. Just like in St Joseph's we were split into four houses named St George's, De La Salle, St Joseph's and St Patrick's and I was in St George's. We were put in dorms relative

to which house you were in and my brother was in the same dorm as me. There was about five to a dorm.

71. When you were in your bed you were only allowed to lie on your side or your back and the big windows were always open regardless of the weather.

Routine

- 72. We were woken up at 6:00 am by the night watchman then got washed in the sink next to the toilet one at a time. We went to mass at 7:00 am followed by breakfast. After breakfast we would do our chores, like mopping the floors and things like that.
- 73. We would then play outside for about fifteen minutes before then going to school. After lunch we would again play for about fifteen minutes before going back to school in the afternoon or else we did sports.
- 74. We had tea at about 5:00 or 6:00 pm then we would be out playing under supervision of the Brothers and maybe the civilian staff. We would then have supper and be in bed before 9:00 pm after washing and brushing your teeth.

Food

75. The food was good. We would get porridge and bread and butter for breakfast and for tea in the evening we would get a main course along with a scone or a pudding. For supper we would get a bun with a cup of tea or milk. I don't recall anybody not eating the food.

Washing

76. Other than washing in the morning and before going to bed we also got a shower once a week on a Friday night which was supervised by one of the Brothers being nearby. Everybody was in the shower at the same time, young and old and it was always freezing.

#### School

- 77. School in St Ninian's was a good education though we didn't get any homework. There was a different teacher for each subject. I liked geography which was taught by Mr who was a really nice bloke. He used to tell us stories about where he had been in the world.
- 78. Mr Available also spoke up for us boys and would speak to the Brothers about the beatings we were receiving from them, though in the end there wasn't much he could do about it.

#### Leisure time

79. There was a lot of sports like football, rugby, canoeing and running. There was also organised competitions between the various houses. We were always supervised. We would also help one of the elderly Brothers who tended the bees.

Chores

80. We did chores in the morning before or after breakfast and would do things like mopping and polishing though the Brothers or Mr McKenna would hit you if they thought you hadn't done the work to their standard. You did chores seven days a week.

Health care

81. We saw a nurse when we arrived and that was about it as far as health care was concerned. However, in early 1969 several of us were lined up and we had to have a talk with this woman called Miss Armstrong who apparently was a psychiatrist. She then gave each of us two tablets with some chocolate with a drink of water. I have no idea what that was about and it only happened on the one occasion.

- 82. I never found out what that was about but when I was about 45 I discovered I had a rare bone disease called Kline-Filter. Basically my bones were rotten, they're hollow inside. My muscles are wasted, similar to cancer, which is why I'm disabled. I don't know if I got that because of those tablets but my main complaint is that nobody ever explained what those tablets were and nobody in my family has such a disease.
- 83. We did see a dentist. A van would come along carrying student dentists who would treat us. We were never given anaesthetics. I saw them twice and got two fillings done without anaesthetics. That happened to at least two or three other boys.

Christmas/Birthdays

84. My sister had moved from Peebles to Stevenage and my mum took me and HRD there for ten days at Christmas. For my birthday I got a card from my dad. He also sent me a watch which I got to look at and try it on before it was taken off me and put with my property which I got when I left the place.

Visitors

85. We got to go home every second weekend which is probably why we didn't get any visitors. We would get a coach to Dundas St in to Glasgow. When we went home we never had any food which was miserable. I was never visited by any social workers.

Trips

86. Mr McKeegan was the PT Instructor and used to take us to the River Forth and showed us how to use canoes. He showed us what to do if the canoe capsized. We didn't know what he was talking about and the next thing I knew I was upside down in the water. That happened twice before he told me to get out of the water. About thirty of us also went on a trip to Kirkoswald in Ayrshire.

## Religion

87. Only the Roman Catholics had to go to mass though I only went for about the first six months. I was an altar boy for a while though I didn't want to do it. There were also religious classes in school.

# Running away

88. Some people did run away but I didn't. I do recall being part of a search party out looking for one of the brothers. It turned out he hadn't run away but had fallen asleep in a cupboard downstairs after being chased by some of the older boys. He got battered for that, knocked senseless by McKenna and Brother Benedict.

#### Abuse at St Ninian's

- 89. St Ninian's was a dreadful place. Brother MBZ and Brother Benedict were the worst for abuse. Brother Benedict was about five feet ten, twenty stone and would run at you and hit with his two fists.
- 90. There was one occasion when one of the other boys called was unwell. He usually cleaned the toilets and the showers so I had to do them. Mr McKenna, one of the civilian staff, said I hadn't done it properly and whacked me with a mop handle on the back. That left me with a bruise.
- 91. There was another time one weekend when we were in the dining room standing in a queue. Somebody was talking and a boy called told Brother Benedict that my brother had said that Brother Benedict had one foot bigger than the other.
- 92. Brother Benedict ran at Brother Benedict but he just brushed me aside. I then heard a crack and everybody was told to get out of the dining room. HRD was taken to a nurse then to Stirling Hospital by Brother Benedict and Brother GSU

- 93. I went with them along with the Brothers, but we weren't allowed into the hospital. Instead Brother took us to the Wallace Monument for about two hours. HRD told me later that they had told the hospital that had broken his arm and that it had happened because he fell out of a tree.
- 94. HRD was scared of heights and would never have been up a tree. Basically, they just covered up what had happened to HRD.
- 95. We used to go swimming in The Forth with Brother MBZ He and two of the civilian teachers Mr McKenna and Mr McKinstry used to try and get the younger boys to sit on their knee and would touch them in the groin area. Two of the boys they did this to were the Brothers while another was the wee boy
- 96. Brother MBZ used to batter me and my brother because we would refuse his affections. He wanted us to sit on his knee. If he saw you looking at him when he was touching up the young kids he would batter you.
- 97. Brother well used to make us kneel against the classroom wall at night and if you're head touched the wall he would batter you over the back of the head with something or punch and slap you. You would be kneeling for half an hour or forty minutes. That happened to me three times.
- 98. If you had a fall out with somebody the Brothers used to make you box it out in the ring on a Sunday. You wore boxing gloves when doing this but they never had any laces. You would then fight it out and the staff would referee it. I was actually quite good at boxing.
- 99. We were taken to Kirkoswald in Ayrshire one time and Brother was again in the water with the young kids. We were in a school next to a police station. There was a church just down the road. I found and let off a flare which wouldn't go out even when I put it in the water. When we got back from the beach I got talking to some local boys and asked them to get me some cigarettes. I had sixpence on me.

- 100. Myself and three other boys called were, and maybe were smoking at the toilet door when my brother walked by going to the toilet. Brother came along and we ran off. As we did we saw Brother grab hold of the hair and battered him in the toilet. He then dragged him down to a bike shed.
- 101. Brother then kicked and punched and battered lumps out of the shed. I seriously thought to be about an hour. I could see this through the window of the shed. I seriously thought he was going to kill HRD. After that me and the others that had been there were dragged off and locked in the church overnight by Brother who battered lumps out of us with a mop handle before leaving us there. We didn't even get any supper.
- 102. The next morning we were taken up to get our meals and I could see the police station and wanted to report what Brother MBZ had done to HRD. However, Brother must have realised what I was thinking and said to me "Don't even think about it". HRD was black and blue and bleeding but wasn't given any treatment.
- 103. A boy called and another one called also told me that, on a separate occasion, Brother stabbed my brother in the stomach with a screwdriver and in the hand with a pencil. He got a plaster put on the wound on his hand but nothing was done about his stomach wound. HRD didn't tell me about this, it was the two other boys.
- 104. Mr MCK another civilian teacher, used to throw dusters at us hitting us on the head with them. I remember he also gave one of the boys a really bad kicking, a boy we called who accused Mr MCK of being a paedo. MCK battered him with the thick end of a pointer. He really leathered into him. It was Mr MCK who dragged him off.
- 105. We were constantly getting beaten by Brother Benedict who would grab hold of you and put you over his knee. He would then pull your shorts right up to your backside and smack you. He seemed to take his time doing that and you could smell the alcohol of him.

106. Brother Benedict also had a machine which he used to electrocute us. He would get us to hold on to two bits of metal then wind up the machine. He would also make groups of us hold hands and then would make one of us touch an electric fence which meant that we all felt the shock.

There was one night when I got up in the middle of the night. I heard the young boy screaming. He had wet his bed and was in the toilet with, Mr McKinstry. McKinstry heard me and asked what I was doing. When I told him I wanted to go to the toilet he told me to stay where I was and closed the door. I don't actually know what he was doing but the boy was crying.

# Leaving St Ninian's

- 108. One day without warning myself and my brother HRD were told we were leaving. We were given no preparation for it. Our mum showed up at St Ninian's to take us home. I was about thirteen at the time.
- 109. When I went home I went to the local Catholic Secondary school which was St Columba's where I was once more subject to a lot of bullying. Life back at home wasn't any better but I managed to stay in school. I got a job delivering milk and stayed at home till I was fifteen.

## **Polmont Young Offenders Institution**

110. In 1972 or 1973, I was sixteen, I was sent to Polmont Young Offenders for one to three years for vandalism along with a friend called who was sent to Thornliebank. I ended up only doing nine months.

Routine

- 111. Polmont had a very strict regime. We would get up at 6:00 am then get washed and dressed and go for breakfast. We then had cleaning duties between 8:30 and 9:00 am when I worked in the kitchen before going to school between 9:00 am and midday.
- 112. After lunch we would be back at school between 2:00 and 4:00 pm and after that we could play snooker, dominoes, games or watch TV. We would have supper and then be in bed for 8:30 pm.

Food

113. We all ate together and the food was pretty good.

Visitors

114. My mum and brother visited me three times. Twice we sat in one of the classrooms and the other occasion it was sports day when we would all be outside.

## Abuse at Polmont Young Offenders

- 115. Polmont was a brutal place and you got kicked wherever you went.
- 116. I had been in Polmont for about six weeks when I was moved from a nice room into room 12 at the end, still waiting to go into the main hall. One Saturday morning a member of staff called HSK came into my room. I was sitting on my bed and he told me to get up. I was maybe a bit slow getting up and he suddenly started punching and kicking me. I think he had steel toecaps on.
- 117. I couldn't move and was being constantly sick after being assaulted and on the Monday or Tuesday I was taken to The Western General Hospital in Edinburgh and was there for four months. It turned out I had a hernia.

- 118. I was operated on by a Professor Wilson who used a new treatment on me called laser treatment and it went dreadfully wrong. I had told the doctors what had happened to me and who had assaulted me. The hospital staff started doing tests on me and took me to East Kilbride every other week for MRI scans.
- 119. The tests were never explained to me nor was I told why I was getting MRI scans. They also did another operation on me during which they put a large tablet inside me which they said was to help my face to grow more hair. They also took biopsies off my back.

### **Leaving Polmont Young Offenders**

120. When I was returned to Polmont from the hospital the regime continued to be strict, it was brutal but there were no more assaults. One Thursday night, after only nine months, I was told I was getting out the next day. I had been given no warning or preparation for it. I was given a travel warrant, some money and whatever savings I had and went home.

## Life after being in care

- 121. I managed to stay out of trouble after that and joined the Territorial Army which I went to every weekend before joining the regular army when I was nineteen. I was in the army for three years until I got an honourable discharge when they discovered a hole in my heart. I didn't know I had it.
- 122. My dad got me a job at sea but I didn't like it. I then got a job working in the Hotel in Clydebank as a commis chef. I then worked all over the place as a chef but had to give it up when I was about 45 when my knees locked one day.
- 123. I remember I went back to St Ninian's when I was fifteen to see but Brother wouldn't let me in and told me wasn't there. They weren't happy that I had showed up.

## Impact

- 124. As a result of my time in the various residential homes I ended up depressed and have twice tried to kill myself. I always allowed myself to be bullied though I don't allow that to happen now.
- 125. I don't trust people and keep myself to myself. My education certainly suffered. I can read but my writing is awful, especially my spelling.
- 126. I was never able to have children because of what happened to me during the operation after I was assaulted in Polmont. It made me sterile. After I got married in 1976 I went back to The Western General in Edinburgh for a blood transfusion due to the fact I was really unwell.
- 127. When I went there I again saw Professor Wilson and when I said hello he went as white as a sheet. He ended up doing the blood transfusion and it was clear he couldn't wait to get rid of me. He was obviously nervous about being around me and, while I never found out why, I fully believe it was because he knew he had got things seriously wrong during that operation when I was in Polmont.
- 128. I constantly have flashbacks and nightmares about my time in care and I feel it's had a massive impact on me.

## Reporting of Abuse

- 129. I never told anybody about what happened to me in the various places because nobody would have believed me. In fact I had forgotten all about this until I read about it in the papers in 2002. My brother contacted me and I went to the police office in Denny in 2004 and gave a lengthy statement.
- 130. In 2006 Brother Benedict and Mr McKinstry were prosecuted in the High Court in Edinburgh. I gave evidence but was only asked a few questions. Both of them were found guilty and got two years but got out immediately on appeal. That's why I always

thought it was a waste of time reporting these things. Brother MBZ	was never brought
to justice	

131. I received criminal injuries of £2,200 for what happened to me at St Ninian's but it was never about the money as far as I was concerned.

#### Records

132. I am presently trying to obtain my records, mainly my medical records from the Western General in Edinburgh.

#### Lessons to be Learned

- 133. I don't think all boy schools are healthy. They should be mixed. There should be more counselling for kids, somebody they can trust and speak to. That's something I never had. I'll be happy if the Inquiry can bring some justice for what I and many others went through and that those monsters who inflicted the suffering on us get punished.
- 134. 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.

