

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GXI

Support person present: No

1. My name is GXI. My surname as a child was GXI. My date of birth is 1942. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in which is just a wee place in the country between Brechin and Montrose. My mother, was very young when she had my sister and me out of wedlock. was two years older than me.
3. We lived with my mum and her mum and dad and brothers and sisters in farm buildings. I don't remember my granny. She died when she was thirty-eight. I remember my granddad, I thought my mum and her siblings were our brothers and sisters back then. With my mum not being married, that's how we were brought up. When I went to school I used to tell everybody that I had lots of brothers and sisters. It was only when I was about twelve or thirteen that one of my mum's sisters told me that she and her siblings were my aunts and uncles.
4. My family travelled a lot because they were farm workers and had to go wherever there was work. We were living in a farm cottage in near the Bridge of Earn when my sister and I were put into care in Wellshill School. I think I had been to Dunbarney Primary School in Bridge of Earn for about six months when we moved to Wellshill.

5. I was five when my sister and I went to Wellshill. We were never told why we were going there to live. At that age you're none the wiser. You don't know who you are or what's happening.
6. In later years I went to Perth registry office and found out that my mum had married a man, who was also a farm worker, about a month before my sister and I were put into Wellshill. This man wasn't our dad. Our father's name is not on our birth certificates. My mother and her husband went on to have eight children. My sister and I often wondered why we were put into Wellshill and I think it was because my mum got married. I could cry when I think about this now.
7. I want to talk to the Inquiry about my own experiences and don't want to talk about my sister or other family members. They have died and are gone now.

Wellshill School, Jeanfield Road, Perth

8. I don't remember how we got to Wellshill. Sometimes I think about it and wonder who took us and how we got there. We must have been picked up and taken there. I don't remember having contact with any people in authority before going to Wellshill.
9. Wellshill was a great big grey stone building in its own grounds, on a hill, with a fire escape at the side and a big playground at the back. It has been demolished but I've still got photographs, which I took about fifteen years ago.
10. It was a place for girls only, aged from about five to secondary-school age. I think there were around twenty girls in total. We called the older girls "the big ones". There was a little cottage on the side of the main building where us young ones slept. We ate our meals in the big house so I think we only slept in the cottage. There were maybe about five or six of us in the cottage, all of us around the same age. I don't remember where the older ones used to sleep.

11. SNR [REDACTED] called Miss GXJ [REDACTED]. It's hard to put an age on her because I was only young. I would say she was maybe in her forties. I didn't know at the time which organisation was responsible for the home but now I think it was under the Perth Homes Trust.
12. I only remember one other member of staff and that's Miss Gerrard. She died a long time ago. There must have been more staff but I don't remember anyone else. Miss Gerrard was [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED]. Her duties would have been to look after the children and see that things were running alright. I think she had a bedroom in the place.
13. I can't really remember the inside of the buildings because we played a lot outside. I don't have any memory of where we washed, what we ate or what the dining hall looked like. I think I was too young to remember what the daily routine was. At that age you don't pay attention to these things. They're just part of everyday life and don't stick in your mind.
14. My sister and I were aware of each other being in the same place but there were two years between us and we had our own friends. You tended to play with your own age group, though we all mixed together in the playground. I don't think my sister slept in the same room as me.
15. Although Wellshill was called a school, we all went out to school. I went to the Caledonian Road School which was beside the library, not far from Wellshill. The uniform was a navy gym tunic and I think the blouse was white. We had play clothes as well. All of the clothes were given to us by the home. I don't think we brought anything of our own to Wellshill.
16. SNR [REDACTED] smacked us young ones once. I just remember that we were misbehaving and SNR [REDACTED] came over to the cottage from the big house and we got smacked on the bottom. I don't remember if it was under or over our clothes.

17. The thing that stands out for me in Wellshill is that SNR [REDACTED] was attacked by one or two of the older girls. I didn't see it but we knew that she had been assaulted and taken to hospital. In my mind's eye, I can visualise her going off to hospital with a towel round her head. It was never spoken about again. I think this was the reason why we were shifted over to Balnacraig School. I'm only surmising this because some of the girls didn't move over with us. I'm quite sure that those involved in the attack were put away elsewhere. I was too young to really understand what was going on and nobody ever talked to us about anything.
18. We moved to Balnacraig in 1950, when I was seven. Nobody sat us down and explained that we were moving. I suppose we would have been out playing when things were being planned. As far as I know, all of us flitted over to Balnacraig except the girls who were involved in the attack.

Balnacraig School, Fairmont Terrace, Perth

19. I don't remember arriving at Balnacraig but it wasn't far from Wellshill so I wouldn't be surprised if we just walked over.

Layout

20. Balnacraig was the same as Wellshill in so far as it was called a girls school but we went out to the local schools. It was a big red building, much like Wellshill. You went along Fairmont Terrace, up a short drive and Kinnoull hill was just behind it. There was a veranda and big French doors at the front of the building which took you through to SNR [REDACTED] room. The front door was on the side of the building and there was a back door as well.
21. There were about seven or eight dormitories. They were all called after places out in the countryside. The names I remember are Glen Ordie, Dalpowie, Moulin, Clunie, Strathyre & St Fillan's, Glen Devon and Amulree. I was in Glen Ordie. I love being outdoors and visiting places in the country so I think that's why I remember all the

names. SNR [redacted] room was Schiehallion after the mountain. The bedrooms were upstairs, scattered around the place. There were four bedrooms where mine was and the other ones were at the other side of the building, which you could get to from my room by going down some stairs to a wee flat bit and then up some other stairs.

22. The dining room was downstairs and there was a recreation room with a big cupboard with books, which I think was at the back of the building.

Staff

23. SNR [redacted], Miss GXJ [redacted], and Miss Gerrard moved over with us to Balnacraig from Wellshill. In those days they didn't have many helpers to look after the children. I think there were just three or four of them to look after around twenty girls. I don't remember any of the other staff. I don't think many stayed long. They just came and went.

Routine at Balnacraig School

Mornings and bedtime

24. There were about six girls in my dormitory. We had single beds, with about three or four blankets on our beds, and everybody had a little locker. I was in the same dormitory for most of the time, but I got moved one time to a different one with one or two of the older girls, and I had a pillow fight with one of the other girls so I was sent back to my old one.
25. One of the staff woke us up in the morning about 7.30 am. We'd get up, fold down our blankets and go and wash our faces. Nobody was supervising this so it didn't actually matter whether we got washed or not. We'd come back, get dressed, make our bed and then go down for breakfast. After breakfast, we'd go to the washroom downstairs and put our shoes and coats on and go off to school.

26. We went off to bed about half past seven or eight o'clock. I don't think anyone checked on us through the night.

Food/mealtimes

27. There was a cook but I don't remember her name. All of the girls ate together in the dining hall. We had our own seat at the table to sit at, just like at school, and the food was brought to us. I liked the food. We got porridge at breakfast which was fine. The only thing I didn't like was the liver. I hated it, probably because of how it was cooked. There were so many girls, so it was probably put into the oven to cook and it came out like leather. I used to cut it up into tiny wee bits so I could eat it. I remember being held back one day after lunch because I wouldn't eat it and I was late getting back to school. They never forced me to eat it, but they did hold you back the odd time, just for devilment.
28. We had our larger meal at lunchtime so we just got a something like a kipper with bread and butter at teatime. We didn't get anything else before bed.

Washing/bathing

29. We got a bath every night which was supervised by a member of staff. The baths were in a bathroom upstairs near where my dormitory was. There were three baths but they were in separate cubicles. We had to stand in a queue some nights, but not every night. We were sent up in groups. As far as I remember, the water was let out after each girl so we all had fresh water.

Clothes/personal belongings

30. We didn't have a lot of belongings, maybe just some toys that we'd got at Christmas or some books. We kept our things in the little locker at the side of our beds. I remember I had a doll and a cloth bunny. The staff must have gone into the lockers to see what was there because they removed things sometimes. They never asked us if there was anything we wanted to keep. They'd just take it away. My cloth bunny

was taken and I kept asking where it was, but I didn't get it back and I think they must have put it in the furnace. I think they did that with a lot of things, but maybe it was no different to what you would do with your own children. You get rid of things when you think it's time for them to be thrown out.

31. We never went out shopping for clothes. We just got hand-me-down stuff. I remember in our teenage years, my sister and I were allowed to go and see my mum. She lived out in the country and I think we were allowed to go there by ourselves, because by this time we were at secondary school. The shoes in Balnacraig were all kept in a cupboard and I needed different ones to go and visit my mum one day, and I remember Miss Gerrard throwing lots of pairs of shoes out of the cupboard for me to try on to see if they fitted. She was throwing the shoes and muttering, "See you ^{GXI} [REDACTED]", as if we were a bother to her.

School

32. The girls in the home didn't all go to the same school. I went to Kinnoull Primary School and then Perth High School, which is now the grammar school, both of which were within walking distance of the home.
33. Kinnoull school was alright. I wasn't exactly a rebel but I could stand up for myself. I remember when I was in my last year at the school and we were all laughing in class for some reason, and the teacher said that everyone who had been laughing had to come to the front of the class and get the belt. I went up and got the belt but I was the only one. I went and sat back down and then I ran out of the class because I was angry that no-one else had gone up. I ran up to the playground and a boy was sent to bring me back. I told the teacher why I had run out of the class and she was fine about it. She understood why I'd done it. We only ever got the belt on the hand. It didn't do us any harm. That's how it was in schools at that time.
34. I got on well at Perth High School. I was top of my class in maths and was near the top in arithmetic. I also liked sewing and music, but I wasn't so keen on gym. I felt so silly being asked to try and jump over those big horses. I would run up to jump and

then just start laughing. I was hopeless at geography. My mind used to go blank when the teacher threw the great big map over the blackboard and pointed his cane at America and the other countries.

35. The girls from Balnacraig weren't treated any differently by the teachers or the other pupils at school. I got on very well with everybody. We had a teacher who had worked in Lagos and she presented me with a book, *The Children of the New Forest*, for being the best behaved girl in the class. I knew I wasn't the best behaved girl and I think she did it because she knew I was in a children's home and she wanted to make me feel special, like I was somebody. It did make me feel special. I still have the book.

36. I was never made to feel special in Balnacraig. We were never encouraged to do well at school. I sat exams and was first for algebra and geometry and the teacher couldn't believe how well I'd done. But that wasn't taken into account by SNR or anybody else in the home when they were deciding what type of work I should go into. They found me a little job helping in a children's nursery in Perth for the summer holidays when I was fourteen. I think I was put there to see how I would like it. It was okay but it didn't mean anything to me at all. Then when I was leaving school, I remember SNR asked me if I would like to go and work in book-binding. I had never even heard of it. Nobody gave any thought to how good I was at maths and arithmetic or considered that there might be other options for me.

Other girls

37. I grew up with the girls in Balnacraig so I remember a lot of the names. My close pal was [REDACTED]. She died with a brain haemorrhage in 1988. [REDACTED] sister was called [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were sisters, as were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. The others I remember are [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and there were two [REDACTED] and two [REDACTED].

38. There was no bullying among the girls. I was able to stand up for myself anyway.

I know some of the girls misbehaved but I don't know what they did. Some of them were sent away to schools in Edinburgh like Dr Guthrie's. I never knew what they did, but I would hear that they were away somewhere else to live.

Leisure time

39. School finished around three o'clock so we'd go back to the home and change out of our uniform into our play clothes and then go outside and play before tea. When I went back to visit some years ago, the grounds looked so small but they were big enough at the time for us to have space outside to run about and play. We just filled in the time running about playing ball games, skipping and building dens with sacks tied to fences.
40. After tea, we'd maybe settle in the recreation room just to talk, read or play. There was a cupboard with books in the recreation room. You had to ask for a book if you wanted one. As we got older, we'd usually just sit in the room sort of idle.
41. After lunch on Saturdays we would go down the road a little bit to a sweetie shop and spend our pocket money. We were allowed to go out on our own. We'd get sixpence or a shilling and we'd go and buy bars of toffee to watch television at night. We could watch television on a Friday or Saturday night. We'd all sit in the staffroom on the floor watching the television, which was a bit of a treat.
42. Some of the girls were chosen to go to the Brownies or Girl Guides. I don't know how they got chosen. I didn't go. I think I should have got the chance to go. I think it would have been good.

Birthdays and Christmas

43. Christmas at Balnacraig was very good. Sir John Ure Primrose, who was the Provost of Perth in the fifties, used to come and dress up as Santa. He would come up and give us our pillow slips with our toys and things in it. I can't remember who else used to pretend to be Santa but it was always somebody official. We'd have our Christmas

lunch and then go out and play in the snow in the afternoon or we'd get taken a walk up Kinnoull hill. Christmas was a nice time.

44. I knew when my birthday was but it wasn't a big thing, probably because there were so many girls. I shared a birthday with another girl and I remember one time the two of us were allowed to go down to the recreation room and share our sweeties. We got to have this wee bit of time together, just the two of us, which was nice.

Trips/holidays

45. We mostly spent our school holidays at Balnacraig, but as we got to about thirteen or fourteen we spent time with families outside the home. My sister and I were taken to Almondbank to spend a few nights with two old ladies who were sisters.
46. We also went to visit a family who lived close to where I live now. I love where I stay now because I have such good memories of this family. We used to visit them about once a fortnight. I remember I used to go with my friend [REDACTED] sometimes. They would take me, my sister and other girls on day trips to places like Broughty Ferry in the summer. They had a piano in their house which I loved listening to. The lady always had things ready for us to do when we went to her house, like sticking shells onto picture frames and other activities like that.
47. We went on a few bus trips with the home in the summer as well. We went out to places in the country, like Dunkeld, Glen Ordie and Dalpowie. They would fill biscuit tins with sandwiches and we'd go into the woods or other such places where we could play and have our picnics.

Healthcare

48. I was ill quite a lot and had to stay off school. I used to get terrible colds and I'd get big cold sores on my face and boils underneath my arms. I think this stemmed from before I went into Wellshill because seemingly I had impetigo when I was small. I remember one of my aunties saying to me that she could remember me having to

get my curly hair all cut off. When I was ill I was usually just looked after in Balnacraig by whichever staff member was there, except for one time I had to go into hospital. I had scarlet fever and was in Kings Cross Hospital in Dundee for about a fortnight. It must have been Easter when I came back because I remember there was a little nest in my locker with one or two eggs in it.

49. We got dental care but I hated the dentist so it was a nightmare for me. When I was about forty I was fed up going to the dentist so I asked them to take all my teeth out. I was fine going to the doctor or hospital and getting injections, but I was always so nervous at the dentist.

Religion

50. We went to Kinnoull Church on a Sunday, but we never got any religious education or told what religion we were. I think we could choose ourselves which faith to follow, and going to Kinnoull Church on a Sunday was just part of our routine.

Family

51. I didn't spend much time with my sister. I suppose we caught up with each other at times, but she had her friends and I had mine.
52. We were kept apart from the rest of our family for a long time. I don't think we were meant to get in touch with them. I don't know how it came about that we got back in touch. When I was about twelve or thirteen, my sister and I visited our granddad in Bridge of Earn. I remember being told then by an auntie that [REDACTED] was our mum. We were then allowed to go out and see our mother, but we didn't do this very often because she lived away out in the country. We had to get a bus out to the country and then walk up a long country road.
53. None of my family came to the home to visit but I remember we used to see two of my mum's brothers. I'm not sure if they came to the home to pick us up. They'd take us around town, to the pictures or for something to eat at teatime. I remember seeing

the picture *The Robe* and I came out crying. I seem to be touched by biblical stories. Something just comes over me when I watch them. I don't remember how often we'd see my uncles, maybe once a month or just whenever they could manage.

Running away

54. One night I was sitting watching the television with my friend who was a terrible one for egging me on. I stood up and was just going to run along the lobby, but I ended up going out the toilet window and running up Kinnoull hill and then along the Dundee Road. I just kept running and running. I knew I was on the Dundee Road but I didn't know how far away Dundee was. I didn't have a plan. It was just one of those spur of the moment things. A couple of cars stopped and asked if I wanted a lift but I refused. Then a lorry stopped and the man must have sensed that I shouldn't have been there and he told me to get in and asked me where I wanted to go. He then took me to the police station at Longforgan. I was asked a lot of questions by the police and given a cup of tea and then I was taken back to the home.
55. When I got back, SNR ██████ took me upstairs to my bed. I don't think I got punished. She kept me off school the next day because my legs were sore from running. I was in my bedroom and she came to talk to me and I gave her a hug and apologised for running away.
56. Another time I was standing on the porch at the front door of Balnacraig, talking to my friend ██████. It was just before teatime. We were just talking and then we took it into our heads to run off and go for a big long walk. We ended up walking to Bridge of Earn, which is about four or five miles out of Perth. I told ██████ that I had an auntie in Bridge of Earn, although I didn't keep in touch with her beforehand and just knew she was there, so we ended up at her house. It was teatime and we sat down and had a cup of tea with her and then we got a taxi back to the home. I don't think we were punished. I suppose we would have got a telling off.
57. I didn't get very far the third time I ran away. I was running along the Dundee Road, with girls from the home coming after me, and I came across a boy in my class at

school coming into Perth on his bike. He stopped me and asked what I was doing and then said that I was a silly girl and told me to get away back to the home.

58. I ran away three times but always on the spur of the moment. I would just get up and go. It was like I just wanted freedom and had to run.

Preparation for puberty/adult life

59. Nobody ever sat us down and spoke to us about growing up. We were not prepared for puberty and never got any explanation about periods. I remember one day when [REDACTED] and I were walking from Balnacraig to see the family we used to visit and we went into a chemist and bought a wee booklet on the facts of life. We really didn't know anything at all and we were all excited reading this wee booklet. I remained ignorant of the facts of life well into adulthood.
60. One thing I was really angry about in Balnacraig is that we weren't very well supplied with sanitary products for our time of the month. We were expected to use just one all day. I remember one day I was so angry with one of the staff because she wouldn't give me something to change with and I started struggling with her to get it.
61. There wasn't really any love or nurturing in Balnacraig. The basics were done for us but there was nobody to talk to if we had concerns and we were never encouraged with anything. That time when I ran away and SNR [REDACTED] came up to see me in the bedroom and I gave her a hug and said sorry, stands out to me. I think I gave her a hug once or twice in the whole time I was there. She didn't hug me.

Visits/Inspections

62. I don't remember any official visitors coming in to see how Balnacraig was being run. As far as I'm aware, nobody ever came in and asked me how I was getting on in there.

Discipline

63. I was naughty once and had to come downstairs and scrub part of a stone corridor. We'd normally have a floor to sweep or something like that at the weekends but we didn't usually do any scrubbing. That was only when we were being punished. It didn't happen very often. We'd have to sit on the bottom stair sometimes as a punishment as well.
64. The older girls helped SNR [REDACTED] a couple of times when I was getting hysterical at my time of the month, but I don't think they had the authority to discipline any of the children themselves.

Abuse at Balnacraig School

65. I used to get all worked up when I reached puberty and it was my time of the month. Sometimes I would get hysterical or I'd be laughing and then I'd end up crying. SNR [REDACTED] used to give me a little white pill about once a month which I now think was to do with how I behaved during my time of the month. She never told me what it was. I must have been really bad one time, misbehaving and being hysterical, and SNR [REDACTED] took me into her room and told me to strip and go upstairs and get a cold bath. She then got two or three of the girls to help restrain me and they carried me upstairs naked. I remember I was struggling and screaming all the way up the stairs. It was so humiliating.
66. I was hysterical again in the recreation room another time when I had my period and SNR [REDACTED] told some of the girls to restrain me. I was hysterical and they were holding me down on the floor with their hands and knees, trying to quieten me down. I think I got some power or energy from the girls round about me and that made me scream and shout all the more. I kept screaming at them until they let me go.
67. My friend [REDACTED] and I got out early from a church service at the end of a school term one day and we went away with our boyfriends. We both had boyfriends who

used to walk us home. On the way home that day, we went up one of the closes and just had a wee kiss. We were then a wee bit late getting back to the home and Miss GXJ was standing on the veranda waiting for us. She said that she knew what we had been up to. She must have thought that we were having sex, which we definitely were not. That was out of the question in our day. We were really innocent and ignorant back then.

68. SNR took us into her room and made us strip and then told us to go upstairs and have a bath with Dettol. She wouldn't listen to us when we told her that nothing had happened. It was dreadful. It's still very upsetting for me when I think about this now. I was a young girl in puberty and I was made to strip and walk upstairs with no clothes on. It was so humiliating.

Three-month stay in Muthley Hospital

69. I was put into Muthley hospital for assessment before I was sent out to start work, because of how excitable I was. This was in 1957 and I was only going on fifteen at the time. It was one of those hospitals where people went when they had nervous breakdowns. They wanted me to be assessed to see if I was alright before I took a job.
70. Miss GXJ had a friend called Dr Robertson who was a psychiatric doctor. She used to visit the home at times, so I'm surmising that they must have had lots of chats about how I behaved and decided that I should go into the hospital. When Dr Robertson came to Balnacraig, she would talk to us girls in a group. She never spoke to me on a one-to-one basis.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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75. I was in the hospital for three months and then I went back to Balnacraig and left there for good shortly afterwards.

Leaving Balnacraig

76. I was in Balnacraig from 1950 to 1957. I left when I was fifteen. It was all planned for my sister and I to go together to a live-in job in Broughty Ferry. My sister had been working in a baker shop for a year or two before that.

77. Someone from the welfare department came to see me before I left. I think it was a man called Mr Earnshaw. Nobody from the welfare department had ever visited before. There was no preparation for leaving. I just got told where I was going. I think Mr Earnshaw took me and my sister to Broughty Ferry.

Life after Balnacraig

78. I went to work in a home for women with disabilities in Broughty Ferry. The women lived there and it was their place of work as well. They did craft work and made different things to sell. I helped the cook and did some domestic work. I got on fine there. I got on fine everywhere I worked. It was a live-in job and I shared a bedroom with my sister. She was seventeen and I was fifteen. I don't think we had any further contact with the welfare department or anybody else. I think we were just put there and left to move on into adult life by ourselves.
79. The job was good but the pay wasn't very much. I think it was just under £6 a month. It was always spent within a fortnight and we used to go to the matron/cook in the home and ask for a loan.
80. I don't know what us young ones with no family home would have done if we hadn't had the cafes with the juke boxes back then. They were great. We would get away down the road after work once or twice a week and just sit together in the cafes, drinking soft drinks and chatting and playing the juke box. I loved Elvis and Tommy Steele. Those were the happiest times of my teenage years. I was a teenager getting to know all the rock 'n' roll music and joining in with other young folk. It was such a great time. I loved it.
81. I stayed in the job in Broughty Ferry for about six or eight months and then I was off again. I can't remember what made me leave. I took off and bumped into a girl who had been in Balnacraig for a while and was living in Dundee. I stayed with her one night and went with a boy from the café to stay with friends of his the next night.

Then I went to the Salvation Army for a night or two and they told me that I'd better get back to my work. So I went back for a wee while and then I left again.

82. What a life I had as a teenager. I don't know where I got the energy from. If I wanted to leave somewhere, that's what I did. I stayed here, there and everywhere. It was also a difficult and restless time though. I didn't have anywhere to call home. It would have been nice to have had somewhere I could return to or someone to talk to, but I didn't have anyone. I had to look out for myself.
83. At one point when I was still only about sixteen, I went back to Balnacraig because I was totally lost and didn't know what to do. SNR [REDACTED] didn't give me any help or support. She arranged for me to go back to Muthley Hospital. I went back there and stayed for three months again.
84. When I came out of the hospital, I went to the Salvation Army. They got me a job in Alloa for a year. I then went to Kinross and worked in a private house. I was there for two years learning to cook.
85. I got engaged to a chap in Montrose but broke up with him and then got married for the first time in 1963, when I was twenty-one. I had known my husband since I was fifteen and living in Broughty Ferry. I had two sons with him. I got married again in 1977 and broke up with him about six or seven years later. An awful lot happened in between, but that's a brief summary of my life.

Reporting of abuse at Balnacraig

86. I didn't report what happened to me in Balnacraig because back then you didn't think about doing that. We didn't know we had any rights. As far as I was concerned, SNR [REDACTED] was [REDACTED] and we just had to live by whatever she said.

87. I wanted to tell the Provost, Liz Grant, a few things about Balnacraig so I wrote to her recently. I got a phone call from the Provost's secretary and she took a few notes but I didn't hear from her again. That was the only time I told anybody about the attack on SNR in Wellshill. After a few months, I got back in touch but they weren't interested in hearing from me so I never got the chance to meet with the Provost.
88. I have never spoken to the police about Balnacraig.

Impact

89. I have never had any treatment or support because of my experiences as a child. You just move on and do the best you can. Then when you go into marriage and have children, that's what you focus on.
90. I was a great mum, but I carried on moving from place to place even after I had my children. Every now and then I had to get out to the countryside and live in a country cottage. I moved out to the country with my children quite a few times but had to go back to town so that they could have pals and go to school. I have never felt that I belonged anywhere or to anyone.
91. I think I would have had a better career if my ability in maths and arithmetic, and sewing and cooking, had been recognised and encouraged by the people looking after me. Some of the girls in my school went on to become nurses and secretaries, but I think the choices for me were more limited because I was in Balnacraig. I've done lots of stuff and went to a catering college in the 1980s, but I think I could have had a better career if circumstances had been different.
92. In my adult life, I've met one or two people who've given me advice and encouragement. One person in particular gave me a lot of confidence. I met him through hill-climbing. I decided in the 1980s that I wanted to change my lifestyle, so I stopped going to clubs and drinking and playing darts and took up hill-climbing. I

then became friends with a man who was a hill-climber, explorer and author. I was doing some housekeeping in private houses at this time and he asked me to look after his mother while he was away on an expedition. I ended up staying there much longer than the initial agreed period. I loved looking after his mum. It was a wonderful time. And my friend helped me because he wouldn't listen to people who talked themselves down. When I used to say that I felt bad about moving house an awful lot with my children, he would tell me that I hadn't done anything wrong, reminding me that I had worked for myself and hadn't relied on anybody else for money. He gave me the greatest of confidence. I still keep in contact with him now - it's absolutely brilliant.

93. I don't like to tell people that I was brought up in Balnacraig. It's a shame really because it's a natural thing to talk about your family and childhood, but I don't. I just keep myself to myself. When people ask me where I come from, I can't be open about my upbringing. I decided some time ago not to tell anybody where I was brought up because people look down on you when they hear that you were in Balnacraig.
94. When I was married to my second husband, we never argued but one time in about 1980 he came back home after drinking in a club and was very offensive about my mother. He insulted her and said that she was the reason why I was brought up in an institution. I still get upset when I think about this now. I was so angry I felt I could have physically harmed him. It's such a shock when somebody comes out with something like that about your mother. I stayed with him just another three years, until my son finished his secondary school, and then I left him. Such was the strength of my feelings that I decided then that I would never live with another man again. I couldn't trust myself. I am friends with men and get on great with them, but I am on my own as far as relationships are concerned.
95. I keep telling myself that I shouldn't be ashamed of being brought up in Balnacraig, because it wasn't my fault that I went there. Children shouldn't be punished for what happened to their parents. People should bear this in mind and not look down on anyone who was brought up in care.

Other action taken

100. Wellshill School was demolished in the last ten years or so and there are houses there now. I went up before it was demolished and took photographs. I still have these and have shown them to the Inquiry team.
101. I started writing my autobiography in the seventies, but my sister didn't like it so I stopped. I started again in the eighties and I've covered the period from when I was living with my family in the farm cottages up to when I was twenty-one. I felt that I had to write it down because I had no-one to talk to about my childhood and teenage years. I have given a copy to the Inquiry.
102. I went to see a solicitor to talk to him about Balnacraig, but he wasn't really interested. I took my story with me and wanted to give it to him but he wouldn't take it. He looked up Balnacraig on the internet and somehow got in touch with the lady who was running it then. I think she was someone from the Perth Homes Trust and was called Miss Thomson. She wrote back to the solicitor and told him that I had said my time in Balnacraig was one of the happiest times of my life. I had to write back to my solicitor and let him know that I had never said that, but nothing more came of it. I think people just twist things to suit their own agenda.
103. I used to phone Balnacraig because I've done lots of things since leaving there, such as hill-climbing and painting and I've written poetry, and I thought that they could maybe help me to get a book made up. I thought I could let the children living there at the time see what I had done, hopefully to inspire them, but they never took me on.

104. I went to an open day at Balnacraig in 2002. I had been contacting them by phone for a while and that woman Miss Thomson, who had been in touch with my solicitor, invited me along. Not once at that open day did Miss Thomson mention my name or say that I was there because I was an 'Old Girl'. It had been my home for ten years but she never introduced me to anyone. I was standing there amongst everyone and it was like I wasn't even there. They left me to go around the building on my own.

Hopes for the Inquiry

105. I hope that people learn not to judge children in care. It's not their fault that they're in care. I also hope that the children in care now get better opportunities than I had. They should be given every chance to follow what they are good at in school and should be encouraged to do so.

106. It's been a great big relief to spill all of this out. I'm glad that I've finally had the opportunity to be listened to. None of the other people I approached wanted to listen to me. I think it was too close to home for them. I don't think they wanted to hear or do anything about it because they were all part of the establishment. I hope the Inquiry brings about a change where people in authority become more open to listening to people who were brought up in children's homes.

