

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HBW

Support person present: No.

1. My name is HBW my date of birth is 1948. My contact details are known to the inquiry.

Life before Smyllum

2. I am the oldest of three children. I have a brother who is 6 years younger than me. My sister is 2 years younger than me.
3. Before I went into Smyllum my father moved us around the country a lot. He was the type of person who couldn't settle in one place. We ended up in the waiting room at Waverley Station, Edinburgh after travelling back from England. Eventually the authorities, the cruelty department, caught on that we never had train tickets to go anywhere. My brother, sister and me were taken into care. I would have been about 8, was 6 and was 2. I think that my mother and father got a room with the Salvation Army.
4. The first night we stayed in a home but I can't remember where this was. We were then moved to Smyllum. We had an escort and went by train to Smyllum. No one said why we were going into care. We were just told that we were going to a place called Smyllum Park.

Smyllum Park, Lanark

5. When we arrived at Smyllum a nun asked me how old I was. She told me that I would be in the little boys department. There were four departments for boys at Smyllum. A nursery, boys aged 4 to 9, boys aged 9 to 12 and the 12 to 16 group. [REDACTED] was taken to the nursery and [REDACTED] went to the girls department. I didn't really give much thought to things at that time. It was once you were in the home that you started to get a wake-up call.
6. Smyllum was a huge place. All the dormitories and the play areas were at the rear. There were areas where you couldn't go, which were restricted.
7. I remember being shown to my dormitory. The sister and the staff member responsible for the dormitory had small cubicle rooms. These were at the end of the dormitory. There were about 20 beds in the dormitory but I think that there were only about 10 other kids. I was given the number 9. Everyone had a number. The beds were side to side and numbered. Your number matched with your bed number. The beds were in lines with a passage up the middle. Everyone had a small bedside cabinet next to their bed. You couldn't lock it and things were stolen from mine.
8. You were provided with a tooth brush, a plastic cup, toothpaste, toilet bag and a towel. These all had your number on them. At the end of the dormitory were the toilet areas. There were hooks there, which were numbered. This was where you would hang your toilet bag and towel at your number.

Staff

9. Sister [REDACTED] AGI who was in her 30's, was in charge of my dormitory. There were two other staff members. One was a small [REDACTED] woman who I think was called Miss [REDACTED] HBX. The other staff member was [REDACTED] IAQ. Both the staff members I would say were aged in their 40's.

Routine

Mornings and bedtime

10. In the morning, about 7, the sister would wake you up by ringing a bell or clapping her hands. It was earlier on a Sunday because we had to go to the chapel. Every morning you had to say your prayers and make your bed. You would then get washed and brush your teeth before going to breakfast.
11. Bed time was about 8 every night. I can't remember if we had a wash and brushed our teeth before bed. I'm quite sure we would have. If you had been given a comic by a visitor you were allowed to read this until lights out. There were no books to read other than religious books. Lights out was about 9. [REDACTED] AGI [REDACTED] would ring the bell and tell you it was lights out.

Bed wetting

12. When you were woken in the morning by the sister you had to fold down the sheets and stand next to your bed. The nun and the [REDACTED] HBX [REDACTED] would then walk down past the beds and feel them to see if they were wet. Thankfully I never wet the bed. The guy in the next bed to me did. Every morning his bed would be wet and the wee woman would grab him by the hair and rub his face on the bed sheets. She would say to him, "You are a fish, what are you. You are like a fish, you are always wet like a fish". This poor laddie would be roaring and greeting. That only made him worse. He was a bundle of nerves and would wet the bed the next day as well. Everyone that wet the bed got the same treatment. These women were wicked. They were supposed to be nuns. I'm not saying every one of them was wicked but the majority were.
13. The wee [REDACTED] HBX [REDACTED] woman would strip the beds that were wet. The bed wetter's had an orange rubber thing underneath that covered the whole bed. It must have been uncomfortable and you could hear it creaking and squeaking through the night.

Food

14. In the morning when we went for breakfast there was usually a choice of either cornflakes or porridge. This was served from big terrines. There were a couple of women who worked in the room where we ate. They would ask what you wanted and ladle it out into a bowl. You would then sit at a table where there was big pot of tea. One of the women would pour the tea into your plastic beaker. Everything was plastic, the plates and the cutlery everything. Once everyone was finished we would all go to school unless it was the weekend.
15. You would have your lunch and tea in the same big room. The meals were served by the same woman. For tea you might have something like sausage roll, beans or potatoes. I hated the food. The beans were all dried up and burnt. The potatoes were steamed and still had the skins on them. I would always try and leave my potatoes or give them to the wee boy next to me. You couldn't leave the food. The sister would come over and stand next to you until you ate everything. You were forced to eat as you knew that you would get a clout if you never. The sisters would say to you that the food was from God and you had to eat it.
16. If it was a feast day, like St Augustus or St Mary then the food wasn't too bad. You might get a bun or an apple or a bit of brown bread. You thought that this was great as this was the only time you saw cakes or apples.

School

17. The school was within the grounds of Smyllum. My dormitory was above the school. It was just one big building that was partitioned off. My teacher was [REDACTED] HBY she was [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] HBY had a pointer like half of a snooker cue. She would point at the blackboard with this pointer. If you done anything wrong you had to go out to the front. She would whack you across the hands with the pointer. It was agony. I'm surprised that she never broke anyone's fingers with it. I was never hit with the pointer but I saw plenty of the other children getting hit, including girls.

Religion

18. I done okay at school. I learned the Catacism. This was a catholic book. The nuns were obsessed with religion and used to have competitions and question you about it. If you were good with your Catacism's then you were a good boy. If you weren't then you were a bad boy and useless.
19. Sister [REDACTED] EAA was in charge of the school. She would come into the class and ask you questions about the Catacism. I made sure that I knew the answers. I was wise and kept in with them. They would tell me that I was a good boy.
20. I was about 10 when I had my first communion. I was treated like a saint for the day. The sister woke me up and dressed me all in white. No one else was allowed to touch me that day. I was in a state of grace. After the communion I was taken to another room. There was a lovely table laid. There was biscuits, cakes and apples. That day I got a lovely meal. It was steak pie, roast potatoes and cauliflower. When I went to bed the whites were taken away from you. The next day I was no longer in a state of grace, I was plain number [REDACTED]
21. After my first communion I had to start going to confession every week. I thought that the father, I don't know his name, was a bit weird. At confession he would ask me if I had been thinking of girls legs or breasts. I was only 10 and didn't think of any of that then.

Siblings

22. I was always kept apart from my brother and sister. When my dad visited he would see us one at a time, never all together.

Chores

23. I was never given specific chores to do. The only thing I can remember was polishing the wooden dormitory floors.

Leisure time

24. After school you would change into your old clothes. Once you had your tea you could go to the hall but there was nothing to do. You weren't given a football or a toy. You never got anything to keep you occupied. If you were outside you could play on the merry go round. Sometimes we were allowed to go to the TV room. There would be about 12 to 20 of us all sitting in rows. The nun would sit behind us. The nun would pick the programme we watched. It would be about religion or country matters about cows and sheep. It was always something like that, educational.
25. You didn't get to see the TV every night, it was a treat, but it was always what the nun decided. You never got to watch cowboys and Indians or anything like that.
26. There was a tuck shop on a Saturday. If your dad had visited and gave you some money the sister would take this off you. She would mark it in a book how much it was. After you had bought something at the tuck shop the sister would tell you how much you had left.
27. There were some children at Smyllum that were orphaned. They never had any money so couldn't get anything from the tuck shop. I would sometimes give them a sweet.

Hygiene

28. In the washroom and toilet area there was a large trough. It was like a cattle trough and ran the whole length of the room. It was sunk into the floor and this was where you had a bath. There were no showers. The sisters would fill the trough. You wore a pair of trunks to go in the bath. If someone had been in before you then they would take the trunks off and you would have to put the same pair on. It was horrible as they were soaking wet. About ten of you would sit back to back in the trough. The sister, Miss **HBX** and Miss **IAQ** would all sit watching you. I felt really uncomfortable when I came out of the bath and had to take the trunks off. I used to cover my private bits with my hands. I was very self-conscious with these three

woman watching me. Once I was dried and had my clothes on the sister would drain the water away. She would then fill it up again for the next ten to go in.

29. You had a bath about once or twice a week. After the bath the sister would check behind your ears. If they were dirty she would twist your ear and make you go back and clean them. I learnt very quickly to make sure I done things right.

Holidays

30. Once a year we went for two weeks to a summer camp in Aberfoyle. The nuns would hire buses to take us there. Aberfoyle was a big camp made of wood. You were given a yellow haversack and you put all your things in it. Everything you needed and wanted to take with you went in the haversack. The sisters and helpers would take you for walks. It was a totally different regime from Smyllum. You weren't getting slapped and battered. It was the same staff who were with us at Aberfoyle.

Birthdays and Christmas

31. My birthday was never celebrated at Smyllum. One day was like another. No one ever said, "Oh it's your birthday today". The nuns never knew when your birthday was. The only people who knew was your family. I knew [REDACTED] birthday and she knew mine. If I saw her on my birthday she would say "Happy Birthday" to me.
32. At Christmas if you were good you would get to go and stay with a family for a day. I remember one time I was dropped off in the morning. There was a man and a woman and they had two kids of their own. As you were a visitor you were treated a lot better. There was a nice table laid and I was given a toy car as a present. I think it was because I was good at my Catechism and I sang in the choir that I was allowed to go to the family. I know that not everyone was allowed a day with a family. It was only a certain few.
33. Any presents that you were given you were allowed to keep. They were never taken off you. It was different if my father left me with sweets, like smarties or toffee. The

sister would ask what my father had given me. The sister would take the sweets from you and you would get them back when the tuck shop was open. I think this was to make sure that you never made yourself sick by eating all the sweets at once.

34. You were never taken out at Christmas and there wasn't a party that I can remember. You never received a present from the nuns, maybe an apple or orange. That was all. When you were given this you had to line up in a big queue and the sister would sit at her desk handing you the apple or orange. You might get a present sent to you in the post from your family. This would be given to you and you would be told who it was from.
35. As Christmas was a feast day the meal you got wasn't too bad. You might get an apple, orange or ice cream. It was such a big day for the catholic church that you were treated okay. I don't remember anyone getting ill-treated on Christmas day.

Visits/Inspections

36. My dad visited me about once a month. My mum sometimes visited but most of the time she stayed at home. When you had a visit you put your school clothes on. These were hand me downs but they weren't torn or had holes in the shoes like the clothes you changed into after school.
37. When my dad visited you were left alone. The visit lasted about an hour. The room where I was taken to meet my father was a big room like a parlour. There was a piano and lots of books on the shelves. I liked to go for a walk in the grounds with my father. You weren't allowed to leave the grounds and go into town or anything like that.
38. I never got a visit from anyone else other than my mum and dad. The social work never visited. There were never any inspections when someone official asked me how I was.

Medical care

39. Whilst I was at Smyllum I never saw a doctor or a dentist. If you had a sore, ringworm or warts, which I did, then you went to see one of the sisters. She wasn't a doctor. She would ask what was wrong then get a big tub of cream. She would rub some on where the affected area was.

Abuse at Smyllum

Sister [REDACTED] AGI [REDACTED] and her staff

40. The nuns had wooden hairbrushes tucked into their tunics. They would use these to hit you. Sister [REDACTED] AGI [REDACTED] would hit you on the knuckles and head with the brush. This would be for anything or if she wasn't pleased with you. The wee hunched back woman was the same. She would twist your ears. She was wicked.
41. The nuns in Smyllum wore big hats. We thought that they didn't have any hair. On one occasion Sister [REDACTED] AGI [REDACTED] was in her room at the end of the dormitory. There was a small window, which was quite high up. This window had a curtain drawn over it. One night one of the boys, I don't know his name, decided to try and see in through the window. This was to find out if the nuns had hair or not. He climbed on a bed to reach the window. As he did this Miss [REDACTED] HBX [REDACTED] the staff member, saw him and dragged him down. I think that she thought he was looking through the window to see the nun naked. She started shouting at him and then gave him a beating. Sister [REDACTED] AGI [REDACTED] came out her room because of the commotion. When she was told what the boy had been doing she joined in beating him as well.

Sister Superior

42. One day I was in the playroom toy fighting with another boy, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was on top of me when the Sister Superior came in. I think that she thought we were simulating sex, which we weren't. We didn't know about that as we were only 10.

She dragged both of us to her room. She took out a big stick like a pointer and hit us over the hands and head with it. I don't know what the Sister Superior's name was.

AFF

43. In the area where the boys played there was a toilet block. This was only for the boys. One day I went into the toilets and a guy called AFF, who was about 18, was there. AFF was brought up at Smyllum and had stayed there after he was 16. AFF was in charge of cleaning the toilets. When I went in AFF grabbed me and shoved me into one of the cubicles. AFF took out his penis. He made me play with his penis. I can't remember if he ejaculated but I heard another couple of boys come into the toilets. AFF put his penis away. He made me tell him my name and then said if I told anyone he would get me. I never told anyone about this incident.

BAC

44. BAC was the [REDACTED] at Smyllum. I don't know if he lived there. One day a nun asked me to take some wet towels to the boiler house. I was to hang them up to dry there as it was warm. When I went into the boiler house BAC was there having sex with a woman called Molly who worked in the kitchen. BAC came up to me and asked me what I was doing there. When I told him I was there to hang up the towels he said if I told anyone what I had seen he would kill me. He then told me to go and hang up the towels.
45. On another occasion I was in a big wooden hut that was called BAC place. I was there with some other boys. BAC would get you to run round the hall in a circle. He had a big leather ball that he would kick at you as hard as he could. If it hit you then you were out. BAC kicked the ball at me and hit me on the side of the head. I was in agony and in tears. The ball had burst my ear drum and I went to see one of the sisters. She put drops in my ear but I could feel them running down the inside of my neck. I ended up with an infection and to this day I am partially deaf in that ear. This was all because BAC kicked the ball at my head.

Other abuse

46. I remember one day a new boy arrived at Smyllum. I think his name was [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] He was about the same age as me. The sister asked me to take him to the dormitory and show him his bed. When we got to the top of the stairs I realised that he had messed his pants. I took him back to the sister, I can't remember her name. When she saw what he had done she grabbed him by the hair and held him at arm's length and dragged him to the bathroom. I heard him getting a hiding and the sister was calling him a filthy beast. I never actually saw him getting hit but I could hear it.

Reporting of abuse

47. When my dad visited me I told him about the place. I said that it was horrible and told him about being battered. My dad was very laid back and said not to worry about it as he would have me out soon.
48. I have never reported any of the abuse at Smyllum to the police.

Leaving Smyllum

49. I was 11 years old when I was told that I would be leaving Smyllum. I was over the moon. The day I left I was taken to the lockers where my old clothes were. These were the ones I was wearing when I arrived. They were obviously too small for me by that time. I was given other clothes and shoes that fitted. They kept your old clothes.
50. My father came and got us. [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and me. One of the sisters waved us off and we went back to Edinburgh. By this time my mother and father had a house in Craigmillar. It was like coming out from a concentration camp.

51. I was enrolled in a new school. I started hanging about with a group of boys, some of them were neighbours of mine. One of them, I don't want to name him, sort of trained me to be a wee thief. This guy was very streetwise.
52. I had been out of Smyllum about 6 or 7 months when I was caught breaking into a car. I was taken to the police station. The next day I had to go in front of a panel. There was two or three of them in the panel, a couple of women and a man. The man said "I think another spell in Smyllum would maybe help him". When I heard this I burst into tears at the thought of going back there.
53. I was taken by a welfare officer on the train back to Smyllum.

Returning to Smyllum

54. I think it was the Sister Superior who met me at the door when I went back to Smyllum. She recognised me and asked what I had done. When I said I had stolen something she said "So you are a little thief, repeat it, what are you".
55. I went back to the same dormitory although I had a different bed and number.
56. Sister **AGI** the **HBX** and Miss **IAQ** were still there. Everything was just the same. These woman never had any love or compassion. The punishments never stopped.
57. The second time I was in Smyllum I was there about 9 months. I think I would have been 12 when I left and went back home.

Life after Smyllum

After I was in Smyllum the second time I was a bit wild. I was in the with the wrong company. I think I was neglected by my mother and father even though I loved them. We were left to our own devices.

58. When I was 15 we moved to Dundee. I managed to get a job in a sawmill with my uncle. I tried to join the RAF but my application was refused.
59. Not long after this I met my first wife [REDACTED]. She had two kids. I was with [REDACTED] for thirty years. After the kids left home we drifted apart. For me the marriage was over.
60. I met my second wife, [REDACTED], not long after I split with [REDACTED]. After I divorced [REDACTED] I got married to [REDACTED]. We eventually moved down to Nottingham and I managed to get a job as a bus driver there.
61. When we were in Nottingham we became friends with a lovely lady, [REDACTED]. She was quite elderly. [REDACTED] asked if I would help her keep her garden tidy, cut the grass and trim the hedge. [REDACTED] later employed me as her gardener. When [REDACTED] became ill after a slight heart attack we moved in with her and looked after her. After [REDACTED] died we were told that she had left her bungalow and the contents to us in the will. The house was too big for us so we sold it. The money let me and [REDACTED] retire. After a while we decided to return to the Dundee area.

Impact

62. I have my memories of Smyllum and what happened to me. I can't forget that, it was a horrible experience. I've never went for any treatment or support. I don't think I need anything like that.

Records

63. I have never tried to obtain a copy of my records from Smyllum.

Other information

- 64. The reason that I got in touch with the Inquiry was after I saw the report on Smyllum in The Sunday Post.

- 65. I had previously spoken to [REDACTED] when she was alive, about Smyllum. We spoke about what happened in there. [REDACTED] was too small to remember his time in Smyllum so I haven't discussed it with him.

- 66. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..... [REDACTED]

Dated..... 3/11/17