

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

[REDACTED] BGE [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is [REDACTED] BGE [REDACTED] I was born [REDACTED] I'm known as [REDACTED] My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1948. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My mum and dad were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I have five brothers and a sister. They are [REDACTED], [REDACTED], BCR, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I'm the third oldest. There's only about a year and two months between [REDACTED] BCR [REDACTED] and me.
3. I was born in [REDACTED] up near [REDACTED], in Scotland. I can't remember much about my life before going into care or where we lived. My mum and dad were always fighting. My dad drank a lot. I don't think they could look after us. They shouldn't have had us in the first place.
4. Just before we left to go to Aberlour, the last words my dad said to me were "don't scratch your head" because I had nits. I was five when we were taken away. I'm sure I had a kilt and a white blouse on. I was taken with [REDACTED] BCR [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to Aberlour in a car. [REDACTED] was just a baby. I don't think my two older brothers, [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] came with us. They went to stay with my mum in Stornoway. My mum was from there. I can remember them being in the orphanage but they must have come to Aberlour later on.

5. We lived quite a bit away from Aberlour. I think it must have been someone from Aberlour who took us but I can't remember. I have a piece of paper from Aberlour Orphanage about my mum and dad which stated that a limousine had been sent for us to take us to Aberlour. I can't remember it though.

Aberlour Orphanage, Aberlour

6. The orphanage was a great big house just outside of Aberlour village. The cobbler and warden had a house in the grounds. There were lawns, a tennis court and a swimming pool. It was such a big place. St Margaret's Church was nearby.
7. There was a big hall inside with long, wooden floors. We had to polish them every day. I can remember there being a big dining room on the ground floor. I don't remember much about it. I think it was all on one level. I don't remember being upstairs.

Routine at Aberlour Orphanage

First day

8. They took me in and cut my hair. They cut **BCR**s too. They took a bone comb through my head. It was really sore. I suppose they had to do it. I can't remember anything else about my first day there.

Houses

9. The houses were Spey, Jupps, St Margaret's and St Drouston's. I can't remember the name of the house **BCR** was in. The boys had housefathers. I can remember Tommy Robertson and there was Mr **BGL**. I think he was **██████████**. There was also Dr Gillis. He was the Aberlour doctor. I never really saw much of the men. I think they were called **██████████**

10. My brother [REDACTED] was put into one of the boy's dormitories called Gordon's. If he was alive he would have given his evidence to the Inquiry as well. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were just babies so they went into the nursery. It was called the Downes. It was a separate building. They kept families together.

Staff

11. I can remember Mrs BHM who we called BHM and Mrs QNK BHM was an old battle-axe but she was alright. Mrs QNK was horrible. She was a small bandy woman who wasn't very pleasant. She was older than Mrs BHM
12. There was also a woman called AJF who was nice. I can remember Helen Toppie too. They were housemothers. There were quite a lot of staff.

Mornings and bedtime

13. I slept in a big dormitory. It was a great, big, huge bedroom. It was called St Margaret's. The dormitories all had different names. I think there were quite a lot. There were lots of other girls in my dormitory. I think there were twenty other girls. We were all around the same age. The other girls in my dormitory were [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I can't remember who slept in the beds beside me. I was quite friendly with some of the girls. We moved up to another dormitory when we got older. My sister, BCR was a year younger than me so she was in the room next door.
14. The windows looked out onto St Margaret's at the back. It was a creepy church and everybody used to say that it was haunted. I think they were just trying to scare us. It was an Episcopalian church.
15. BHM would come in and wake us up in the morning between six and seven o'clock. I think she just came in and bawled. She was quite a big woman with brown

hair. Sometimes we'd be woken by another woman, Mrs QNK She was a coarse, horrible woman.

16. Every morning you had to get up out of bed, stand in a line and put your toes right up to the line on the floor. If your toe was above the line, Mrs QNK gave you the cane on the legs.
17. We had to make our own beds before getting washed. BHM checked them and if we hadn't done it properly we had to make it again. We used to fold the sheet up so you couldn't put your feet down. We called it an 'apple pie bed'. We used to do that for fun, you had to laugh of some kind. They weren't happy when we made them like that but nobody owned up to who had done it.
18. We had to get ourselves washed and dressed. There was a wee bathroom just off the dormitory. I think each dorm had its' own separate bathroom. There was a bath and several sinks and toilets in our bathroom. It was all girls but it was all open so we could see each other getting washed. There wasn't much privacy.
19. I think BHM supervised us and she would make sure that we washed properly behind our ears. She would have a look and if they weren't right she would make you go back and do it again. We had a bath every second or third night. I think I shared a bath and the same water when I was younger.

Mealtimes/Food

20. After we had got washed and dressed, we would go for breakfast in the dining room. It was a huge place. There was a massive table. I can't remember if it was just for my dorm and BCR I can't remember boys being there. The housemother would be there too. The housemother served up the food with a ladle and stuck it on your plate.
21. I can remember getting porridge and I hated it. QNK used to shove it down my throat. You had to eat it. You had no other option. You weren't allowed to leave it. If

you left it, it would be forced down so you couldn't leave anything. She would make us late for school making us eat the porridge and we would get the strap at school for being late. It was all her fault.

22. I hated spam. A couple of times Mrs QNK made me eat it. I spewed it all up and she made me eat it. She actually made me eat my own sick. I wasn't allowed to move from the table. The more I was eating it, the more I was being sick. It was horrible. She was a horror, I hated her. It happened to others too.
23. I can't remember getting anything for dinner. I only remember getting supper at half past five. We were given scrambled eggs and tatties. We never got any meat but the staff used to eat meat. I vaguely remember seeing roast beef or something like that but we never got it. The food was rubbish but you had no option but to eat it because you got it forced down you anyway.
24. I think we played again after supper until it was bed time. I remember listening to music quite a lot in the playroom. We had a big gramophone in there. We would all sit around and listen to it. I liked Cliff Richard.
25. We went to bed at seven o'clock. It was really early. I think it was always seven o'clock. There was a telly but we didn't get to see it very often. I can remember watching the Six-Five Special sometimes. BHM would tell us to get to bed and we got changed into our nighties.

Canon Dean Wolfe

26. Canon Dean Wolfe was in charge of the orphanage. He used to organise jumble sales and bring and buy sales. He used to come around quite a lot and speak to us. He would come around to see if everything was alright. I really liked him. He was really good.

27. I don't think he got on with my dad because, according to the piece of paper I have, he struggled to get money from him for our keep. He was always drunk and I think they had a few arguments at the time.

Contact with siblings

28. I can't remember seeing [BCR] at meal times. I don't remember seeing her a lot. I think I only really saw her in the playground. I wasn't allowed to see her in the house. We weren't allowed to mix in the house. You could be friends with someone at school but you wouldn't see them in the house. I didn't see my brothers much either. I didn't see [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] at all because we weren't allowed.

Clothing/uniform

29. We used to get our clothes from the 'Canon Jupp Sales'. People would bring in clothes for us to have these jumble sales. I used to wear a dirndl skirt most of the time. We had different clothes which we wore on Sundays. The rest of the time it was just rubbish clothes. I think our clothes were kept in a big wardrobe but I can't really remember. I think they came round with them and put them on the end of your bed. I'm sure they just left it for you and you had to wear what was put there. We didn't have a school uniform.

School

30. We walked across a wee playground to get to school. The school was within the grounds of the orphanage. There were boys in my class. There were around twenty kids in my class. One teacher, Mrs MacKenzie, lived in the village. She was the sewing teacher. They called sewing, and other skills like that, the domestic lesson. We had Maths and things like that but never had any exams. I don't think the school was very good. I can't remember any of the other teacher's names.
31. The teachers were alright, it was the other kids who weren't nice. Somebody stabbed a pencil into my arm once. I've still got the mark. The kids were really bad. The

ones who did things wrong never got the blame and you always ended up getting the strap.

32. We played with skipping ropes and played "beddies" in the playground. There was nothing else to do. I can remember playing tennis too. I liked tennis. The boys played football in the playground.
33. We finished school at about three o'clock. We played in a big hall until supper time. We used to read books and play with toys. You always found something to do. There were lots of toys and books to read in the playroom.

Leisure time

34. We used to go for long walks at the weekend along the main Aberlour Bridge holding hands, over the Craigellachie Bridge every Saturday, come rain, hail or snow. It was dangerous because it was a nasty road. We would walk all the way into Craigellachie.
35. On Sundays we went to church. That was all we did. We had to go in the morning and at night time. There was one girl, I think her name was [REDACTED] who would collapse on the ground every time. She used to fall against the wooden pews so she used to get knocks on her head every time. It didn't stop them sending her, she still had to go. I think she had a phobia of church or something. It went on for years. It was terrible.
36. We weren't allowed to go into the village on our own. Sometimes we used to go to the shop with one of the housemothers now and again. We would maybe get a shilling to buy sweeties. We didn't really get sweeties very often.

Trips/Holidays

37. We went to stay at Hopeman during the holidays for a couple of weeks. It was a great big house. It would only be so many boys and girls at a time because there

were only so many beds. We all went at different times. I liked going there. It was the only bit that I liked. We used to play on the beach.

38. I can remember going on day trips to Air Displays in Lossiemouth and Kinross too. I loved the planes, like old spitfires and Lancaster bombers.
39. When Dean Wolfe retired from Aberlour he was on This is Your Life TV programme. I was chosen to go down to London to take part in the show. I was eleven. I was in the choir singing 'The Lord is My Shepard'.
40. Canon Wolfe was replaced by the new warden, Mr Leslie. I can't really remember him. I don't think he was at the orphanage for long.

Birthdays and Christmas

41. We celebrated Christmas at Aberlour. We made paper decorations and had a tree. We were given an orange, a sweetie and a toy. It would be a doll every year. We were allowed to keep our toy but it would be kept in the play room and you'd have to share it with the other kids. We had a special meal at Christmas. I think it was the only time we ever got something decent to eat like meat. It was turkey but I didn't like it. When Dean Wolfe was there, Christmas was a good time. I used to like Christmas. We had special church services.
42. I can't remember my birthday being celebrated. I don't remember getting anything. My mother and father didn't send me anything.

Visits/Inspections

43. The only time I remember having visitors would be on sports day. I'm not sure who they were but there used to be a lot of different people who came to watch us. We had sports day within the grounds of the orphanage. We would do the sack race and running. The different houses would compete against each other.

44. Some of the parents would visit at the weekend. My dad came to visit us a few times but he never got in because he was always drunk. I can remember getting a glimpse of my dad now and again but they always sent him away. I can remember him coming quite a lot but I think I only spoke to him once or twice. I think I was the only one who saw him. At least he came to see me, my mother never bothered coming in all the years I was there.
45. A couple of the other girls had visits from their fathers. One of them was called [REDACTED] and she was from the Black Isle. Her dad used to come a lot to see her and bring her things. He had a funny accent. He was a nice man and used to speak to us. I distinctly remember that. There were quite a few of them who had families.
46. I can't remember any social workers or inspectors coming to visit. I was never taken aside or spoken to by anyone. Nobody cared or worried about us.
47. Princess Margaret came to open the new nursery. I have a picture of her with everybody gathered around her. I think she might have actually come on a sports day.

Healthcare

48. There was a small infirmary with beds in the orphanage. I can remember being very sick for weeks and weeks. I was eight or nine. I was in the infirmary. If you had an injury you would go to see Nurse Grant there. I dislocated my knee one day when I was playing in the swimming pool with a rubber ring. My friend and I were throwing the ring back and forth. I tried to catch it in between my legs and I dislocated my knee. I was taken to see Nurse Grant who just used her fist to knock my knee back into place. I didn't like her much after that.
49. I was then taken to Dr Gray's in Elgin. They put a big plaster cast on it. I had problems with it, it kept coming out of place and used to swell up like a balloon. I had to have an operation to rearrange the bones a few years ago.

Running away

50. My brother [REDACTED] kept running away and kept getting into trouble for it. Some of the girls tried to run away too but I don't think they would have got very far. I know that they were punished for running away. Everybody knew each other so you would hear about it. I don't know what happened to [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] after they left Aberlour. I think they joined the army.

Bed Wetting

51. I used to wet the bed. You had no other option because you were scared. You couldn't help it. I was a nervous wreck living there. A lot of kids wet the bed. We had to take our sheets off and put them down on the floor in the bathroom. I don't know where they were taken after that. [REDACTED] BHM and Mrs [REDACTED] QNK would check our beds in the mornings. If you'd wet the bed, we would get the belt in front of everyone. You had to stand in line to get the belt. You weren't allowed to move. It made you worse.

Discipline

52. Mrs [REDACTED] QNK gave me the cane on the backs of my legs and across my bare bottom all the time. Other times [REDACTED] BHM gave me a clip around the ear. I think we were punished daily. It was pretty bad. You got the belt or the strap for the least thing. It didn't matter what you did. It was like being in prison. I lived in fear when I was younger. I was terrified and I hated it. I was scared to open my mouth or say anything. You just landed yourself in trouble. It didn't matter what you said or did especially with [REDACTED] QNK. I was terrified of her. Once I grew a bit older I wasn't as scared. I got into a routine and knew what I was doing. I absolutely hated it when I was younger. You just had to grin and bear it because there was nothing else you could do.

53. I was involved in a big fight with six or seven of the other girls when I was about twelve. There must have been some animosity between us about something. We all congregated down at the creepy bridge and had a fight. We were caught and got taken back by the scruff of the neck. **BHM** knocked mine and another girl's head together. We got the strap for that too and sent to bed.

Abuse at Aberlour Orphanage

Mr and Mrs **BBP/BGZ**

54. **BBP/BGZ** were husband and wife. They were house-parents. They were really bad to **BCR** I was lucky I didn't ever have them. There were swing doors between St Margaret's and **BCR**'s dormitory. Many a time a girl would come through to tell me that **BCR** had been beaten up again. I would go through the swing doors even though I wasn't allowed. I never got to see her because **BBP/BGZ** had locked her in a cupboard all day.
55. I can remember one day I went through the doors and I couldn't find her. A girl told me Mrs **BBP** had locked **BCR** in the cupboard. I had tried to help her as best I could because she was so badly treated but I was thrown out and put back into St Margaret's. **BHM** put me to bed.
56. I saw **BCR** a couple of days later and she was black and blue. I didn't see Mr and Mrs **BBP/BGZ** beating her but the other girls came and told me. I'm really surprised they didn't kill her because of the number of times they beat her up. I still don't like closed doors. I felt really sorry for **BCR**
57. I can remember being locked in a cupboard a few times with **BCR** but I can't remember if it was in Aberlour. I just remember it being dark and not being able to get out. I'm sure it was there.

Mr **AJB**

58. One day Mrs MacKenzie, the domestic teacher, sent [REDACTED] and I out to look for kale in the garden. I didn't even know what kale was. We didn't have a clue where we were going. The [REDACTED] house was just a bit away from the orphanage and his door was a bit open. The [REDACTED] was a man called Mr [REDACTED] AJB He used to [REDACTED]. We knocked on the door but nobody answered so we just looked in. We saw him standing up with his pants and trousers down, he was naked from the waist down. There was an orphanage girl lying down on the floor. I was still young. We just ran away.
59. When we got back we told some of the other girls and [REDACTED] BHM found out. She didn't believe us. We got a hiding and were sent to bed for telling lies. The girl was called [REDACTED] They both had the same name. I always wondered if they were related but I don't know. At the time I thought they were but looking back, I don't think they were. [REDACTED] was thirteen or fourteen.
60. I only saw her once or twice after that. I don't know what happened to her. She might have been put of Aberlour. Mr [REDACTED] AJB was a horrible man who was still there after the incident. He was creep. He was much older than [REDACTED] I don't think she was the only one that happened to because I heard a few stories about him. [REDACTED] BCR didn't like him either. It was a waste of time telling anyone because they didn't believe us. I kept things to myself after that because I got such a scare. [REDACTED] BHM hit me around the ear for telling her.

[REDACTED] BBR

61. There was a housefather called [REDACTED] BBR He sexually abused some of the boys. My brother, [REDACTED] told me before he died that he was badly abused by him. I always knew that he was a baddie because I used to hear things through the orphanage.

Reporting of abuse at Aberlour

62. It wouldn't have done any good to say that I wasn't happy there. There wasn't anyone to tell. It would have been a waste of time. You just had to find your own way.

Leaving Aberlour

63. [BCR] was so badly abused at Aberlour, I don't know if it made her loopy. I think all of the beatings made her like that because she never used to be like that. It would drive anybody mad, being locked in a cupboard and beaten all the time. She could be violent sometimes.
64. I was held back at Aberlour for a year because [BCR] was still there. I wasn't told why, I just knew it was because of [BCR]. They tried to keep families together.
65. [REDACTED] was lucky because he got to go to Aberlour in Constitution Street in Aberdeen. I think it was a half-way house. It was a place they put children to learn life skills so he landed really lucky.

Ladysbridge Hospital, Banff

66. I was sixteen when I left Aberlour. [BCR] was fifteen. We were taken to a mental hospital called Ladysbridge. It was horrendous. I thought to myself, "how could they put anybody in a place like this?" The patients were all mad.
67. It was a terrible place to put anybody, especially two young girls, but I don't think they had anywhere else for me. I wasn't told why I was going there. I assume it was because [BCR] was going there. I was just dumped there. I shouldn't have been there.
68. After a while I was seen by a psychiatrist, Dr Ross. He assessed me and told me that I didn't need to be in there. I was only in there for a few months but I couldn't

wait to get away. It was a horrible place and I hated it. I can't remember **BCR** leaving with me. I think she stayed there for a while.

Wellwood Hospital, Cults

69. Dr Ross sent me to a place called Wellwood in Cults. It was another hospital. There were a lot of disabled and handicapped people in there. There were doctors and nurses there. I presume that I had been put there to work.

70. I had my own bedroom. It was a great, big, huge house. I think Dr Ross had something to do with Wellwood so I think that's why he sent me there but nobody told me anything again.

71. After a while I went to work in the paper mill in Culter. I used to get hacks all over my hands from the paper. They were such a mess. I hated it. I used to have to pay some of my wages from the paper mill to stay at Wellwood.

72. There was a Mr **AJD** a staff member there. I think he was in his late forties. His first name was **AJD**. He was a creep. I saw him in the bath a couple of times with some of the disabled female patients who were only about sixteen.

73. I saw an advertisement in the paper for a job at an old folk's home in Balmeddie. It was on the Ellon Road. I went for an interview and got the job. I was eighteen. It was a Church of Scotland home. I lived in there until I was about nineteen when I met my husband. **BCR** was in Wellwood by then.

Life after being in care

74. I got married in 1969 when I was twenty. My husband was in the Gordon Highlanders regiment of the British Army. After we got married, I flew over to Germany where he was living to stay with him. I was six months pregnant at the time with my first daughter. I can remember the plane was supposed to land in Hanover but it couldn't land due to the bad weather so it was circling around. It was terrible.

We landed in Bremen. When I landed the military police arranged for someone to pick me up. I had to stay overnight there because of the heavy snow and was picked up the next day by a boy who had just passed his test.

75. We lived in Minden for two years. After that we lived in Malta. After my husband left the Army, he worked as a long distance lorry driver and then on the rigs for thirty years. We've been married for fifty years next year.
76. I have three daughters and five grandchildren. I have spoken to my daughters about my time in care. I never treated my children the way I was treated in Aberlour. I never hit them. I gave them everything that I didn't have. They were spoiled rotten.
77. I got my SVQ and worked in nursing homes caring for old folk most of my life. I worked in a home in [REDACTED] for nearly ten years. I left and went to work in [REDACTED] It's been closed down now. I really enjoyed my job.
78. I went to visit my mum once. She lived in [REDACTED] in Buckinghamshire at the time. I think I gave her a whole lot of cheek. I didn't go to her funeral after she passed away. I never saw my dad again after I left Aberlour. He is buried in [REDACTED] with my granny and my Aunt [REDACTED]

Impact

79. I was taken into Cornhill Hospital when I was 25 because I had very bad depression. I had lost a baby when I was six months pregnant. My hair started falling out and I had bald patches all over my head. I was having horrendous pains in my head and the back of my neck. I was given an X-ray. The doctors couldn't find anything wrong so they put it down to depression. I was put on an anti-depressant called Dothiepin.
80. I was taking three tablets every day for years. The tablets made such a big difference to me. I was an entirely different person altogether. I think I became depressed because I worried about things for years in Aberlour. It made it worse because much was bottled up. It wasn't until I moved to Alford that the doctor weaned me off them. I'm much better now.

81. I felt alone and miserable in Aberlour although I didn't miss my mum and dad because I didn't really know them. I never saw my brothers, I wasn't allowed to see them. It was a sad time which affected our relationship. We were never close and I never saw them. I met, my brother, [REDACTED] at the caravan site in Dornich four years ago. I recognised them straight away. He's had a bad stroke so he's in a care home now in [REDACTED]. My other brother, [REDACTED] appeared at my sister's door about three months ago. He took us up to see [REDACTED] in the care home.
82. I wish that someone had spoken to my brother, [REDACTED] because he never settled down. He died not long ago. He had just turned 63. I really miss my brother. We were in touch a lot before he passed away. You think when you're young that everybody is brought up like that and the same thing happened to them. It isn't until later on in the life that I realised that it wasn't right. You shouldn't treat people like that. It was wrong.

Reporting of Abuse

83. I never reported anything to the police because I didn't think anyone would believe me. It wasn't easy to report things back then.

Records

84. I sent away for my records a few years ago. They came from the Aberlour Care Trust in Stirling. I had to pay for them. The records didn't say anything bad about me. They state that I had Diphtheria when I was younger. They don't tell me anything about what happened after I left Aberlour. They didn't mention Ladysbridge or Wellwood or why I was sent there. It seemed as if once you were gone, that was it.
85. I have been to a couple of Aberlour Reunions which were held in Aberlour. I think they were organised by [REDACTED] BCU who was also in Aberlour.

Lessons to be Learned

- 86. I just hope that the way I was treated in Aberlour doesn't happen to anyone else. I spoke to my oldest daughter who told me that I should come forward to share my experience to try to help other people. I hope more and more people come forward to give evidence.

- 87. I think Aberlour should have got rid of Mrs [REDACTED] QNK [REDACTED]. They must have known what she was like to the children. We weren't allowed to complain. I don't know if Canon Wolfe was aware of what was going on. The place would have been a bit better without Mrs [REDACTED] QNK [REDACTED].

- 88. I don't think anybody really cared. They just did a job and that was it. There wasn't anybody to talk to or to listen. There should have been more monitoring of the people looking after us.

Other information

- 89. 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] BGE [REDACTED]

Dated... 10/10/2018