

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Janet BISHOP

Support person present: No

1. My name is Janet Bishop. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1955. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Qualifications

2. I have been involved in research into genealogy for twenty years. I am a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and a member of the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives. I am currently the chairman of the Association of Scottish Genealogists and Researchers in Archives.

Background

3. Earlier this year (2017) I was contacted by the Sunday Post newspaper and asked if I was able to conduct research into deaths that may have occurred within or linked to Smyllum Orphanage in Lanark.
4. I completed a feasibility study for the paper and was paid. I was supplied with a list of years and tasked with researching for links to Smyllum. I used the years supplied to complete searches. From the results I produced a small report which started in the 1860s and listed persons under 16, or maybe 18, years of age.
5. In May 2017 I received a commission for full search of death records contained in statutory Death Register for the District of Lanark, relating to Smyllum. The fee was to be paid fifty per cent from each of the Sunday Post and the BBC.

Research

6. I conducted the research from entries recorded in records held at the Lanark District Death Register held at The ScotlandsPeople Centre Edinburgh – formerly Register House. I examined around fifteen thousand records held between the years 1864 when Smyllum opened and 1981 when it closed. The records held are digital copies of the original death registers.
7. After completing my search I received an appendix list from [REDACTED], and was asked to conduct searches for specific names. This resulted in searches being conducted in other districts to trace the relevant entries.
8. The search took me approximately thirty five working hours which were spread over three months. I was still in contact with [REDACTED] on the Saturday before the Paper's publication on 10 September 2017.

Report

9. I have been shown a copy of my full report and it is listed as Inquiry document INQ.001.001.2106 - 2175. This is an accurate copy of my report.
10. I have also been shown another report, Inquiry document INQ.001.001.2060 - 2105. This appears to be an earlier version with a list of the information contained in my main report. Some of the layout is different from the method I use and I cannot comment if it is entirely accurate.
11. I have been asked to comment on the names [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] on page 2174, of my main report, along with [REDACTED] Francis McColl and Samuel Carr. I can confirm they were part of the appendix list I conducted further searches on. Those records were found in other districts including Carluke, North Glasgow and Edinburgh.

12. The information I was asked to search for and eventually list in my report was to include names, cause and date of deaths, any parents and persons notifying deaths. The deaths would be linked by the deceased having died within Smyllum or having Smyllum as their usual place of residence. I was aware that Smyllum itself had various names from its beginning to closure in 1981.
13. I have checked the death entries for the persons listed in the report. Death entries do not show the site of the burial or cremation of the deceased. This information would only be listed on burial records.
14. Burial and cremation records are maintained by local councils. There are private cemeteries, for instance church burial sites, and the records for those buried in such sites would be maintained by the church or other private owners. I have not been asked to search burial records for any of the people listed or any other burial records relating to this commission.
15. During the years 1855 and 1860 death entries contained information relating to burial locations. From 1860 changes were introduced and they were no longer listed on the death records.
16. Records from 1960s to 1981 sometimes, but not always contain details of usual residence. This is a result of changes in the relevant register forms. The forms and the information required are amended through time, but the forms themselves are standard throughout the country. Any changes are reflected in all offices.
17. Other information that may be missing from some records are details of parents. In instances where either, or both, of the parents are unknown then those columns are left blank. An example of this would be a friend of a deceased person reporting a death who had no knowledge of the parents.
18. With reference to persons reporting deaths, and in particular at Smyllum, it is usually the nuns who are listed as reporting the deaths. In some records you can see a

pattern in that the same nun may report a number of deaths. This may be an indication that it was one particular nun who was responsible for this duty for a time.

19. There are differences in titles from the nuns reporting deaths. The nuns were listed sometimes as school teachers, Sisters of Charity and on occasion as friends of the deceased. This again may be a result of changes in reporting procedures where the informant did not fit a category in use at that time.
20. I have been shown two Inquiry documents INQ.001.001.2056 - 2059 and 2051 - 2055. They are titled Smyllum burials in St Mary's, Lanark and Smyllum admissions book. I was previously sent those documents electronically by [REDACTED] a producer of the radio programme. This was sent at the beginning of my research to see if it would be of assistance to me. In the documents were some names, and they assisted me in searching a particular year for confirmation that the information was accurate. I used it as a guide only as I was having to search all years.
21. There are some records on the document mentioned in paragraph 20 above marked "Not found in Scotland". This may not always have been correct as the names may not have been spelt correctly. When searching if you did not enter the exact spelling you would not find the record you are seeking.
22. The report does not give any indication that there are four hundred children buried in St Mary's Cemetery. It lists the deaths of persons having a connection with Smyllum. I never visited St Mary's to check on their burial records and did not check any other burial records in compiling the report.
23. The report also includes adults at Smyllum. This would refer to nuns and workers resident within Smyllum. It would also include some former child residents who stayed at Smyllum into adulthood as they had nowhere to stay when they were due to leave.
24. The number of deaths in the report shows a decline each decade from post 1930. The majority of deaths in Smyllum occurred during the nineteenth century and early


part of the twentieth century and this reflects the pattern in life during the same period.

Other information

- 25. There is an error in the main report relating to the death of Francis McColl. The report lists the cause of death as left extraplural haemorrhage. It should be extradural haemorrhage. This was my original transcription error and I can confirm the original entry states dural. I highlighted this error to the BBC producer prior to publication.

- 26. History shows that although we record burials and cremations on official documents, there are many people buried without a headstone or marker. There are many reasons for this, but in the main it is a cost issue.

- 27. 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..... 

Dated..... *18-10-2017*