

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

### Witness Statement of

QCJ

Support person present: Yes

### Personal details

1. My name is [redacted] QCJ. I am 82 years old. My date of birth is [redacted] 1934.

### Background

2. I have two older brothers, [redacted], who was three years older than me, and [redacted] who was two years older than [redacted]. [redacted] is the only one left.
3. Our family lived in the Gorbals.

### Admission to Quarriers

4. My mother died. My dad was on his own, and he had five sisters and two brothers, but nobody wanted to take my two brothers and I on, so we all went in to Quarriers.
5. I remember my dad leaving us there. I remember pleading with him to take me home. He said "I can't", and walked away. I know that my father went to war, but I'm not sure what happened to him. I never saw him again after he dropped us off. I was just young and never thought to bring it up with his sister, Aunty [redacted]

### Life in Quarriers

6. I was 4 when I went into Quarriers Village in Bridge of Weir in 1938. [redacted] was 9 and [redacted] was 7.
7. I was in Number 5. My brothers were in Number 40-something. The houses didn't have names, they were just known by the numbers.
8. I stayed in Number 5 for the whole time. Most children stayed in the same place.

9. I never really saw my brothers. I got a glimpse of them at school now and again, but that was all. We weren't encouraged by Miss QBJ to talk to our brothers or about our family.
10. There was a school, and a hospital. You name it and they had it. It was like a village, with all the amenities, all spread out.
11. I don't know why I was put in Number 5. There must have been a vacancy or something.
12. There was maybe 16 to 20 of us in Number 5, going by the dormitories. There was three dormitories. There were girls from about age 5 up to 13/14. The houses all had about the same amount of girls. Miss QBJ was in charge of Number 5. We had to call her "Mummy". She was a bitter spinster. She didn't have a husband or children; no surprise. We used to call her QBJ. There was no other adult in Number 5.
13. All the girls cottages were on one side of the river and all the boys were on the other side of the river.
14. The boys houses had a couple, a man and a wife. It was a QAF/QAG who were in charge of my brothers. They called them QAF/QAG.
15. There wasn't anyone in charge of Miss QBJ. She could do what she liked.
16. There was a Miss QAV. I don't know what she did, but she sat up on the balcony of the church to make sure nobody moved. She had a flat above the shops in the village.
17. There was Dr Kelly. He was the Head something or other. He had a big, fancy house just outside the village.
18. There was a Mr Munro and his wife, they were something or other as well. Superintendent or something. They had something to do running the homes, the whole place, more on the office side. The only time you saw them was in church.
19. Church was a big part of life. We went to church twice on a Sunday, morning and night, and a Wednesday night.
20. There was a Miss QBM. She was in charge of Number 13 or something like that. She had a bad reputation. She was very cruel. We all saw it, you could tell. They used to talk about her at school. She was awful cruel to the children, belted them. Just cruel.
21. I remember Miss QNG. My brother was with her for a while. She was nice, she had a good reputation.

## School

22. I liked the school. I didn't have any problems. I just hated when it was the summer holidays.
23. The teachers were all nice. They lived mostly in Bridge of Weir or Kilmacolm and would travel in.
24. That's when I saw my brothers. Now and again, I'd speak to them but not for very long because the school bell would go. They didn't speak about how they were getting on, they were just used to it.

### Leisure

25. In the summer holidays, we were all day with Miss **QBJ**. We had to do all the spring cleaning. All we did was clean. It was all child labour, Quarriers, summer and winter. They didn't have people coming in to clean. The children did it. Making their beds, washing their clothes, washing their bed sheets, ironing, dusting, cooking (there was a kitchen girl, one of the older ones). There was a kitchen fire, and one in the playroom that had a big guard on it, and one of the older girls would tend to the fires. I don't know what Miss **QBJ** did, apart from sitting in her parlour. She didn't help with the chores. All the houses were the same.
26. Then she'd take us for a 5 mile walk. We got that used to it, we would walk miles. She never said why she walked us. We had to line up in two's and she would say "We'll go the 5 mile today", or "We'll go the 3 mile today".
27. There was a play area at Number 5, gravel with a railing round it and tarmacadam. You got a chance to play some of the time.
28. When we came home from school, we all had a chore to do so there wasn't much leisure time. You'd to polish the shoes, peel the tatties, set the table, all those sorts of things. There wasn't a lot of time for play. There was more in the summer holidays, and we played out in the playground.
29. There were no books to read. We didn't do homework, we didn't get any from the school. They must have been told not to give us homework. There might have been Ludo at some time, but they never lasted long. They probably got torn up.
30. We got a trip once a year. We just went as far as Paisley. We would walk round the Woolworths and back again. Paisley's not far from Bridge of Weir, but there was a lot of excitement, it was like freedom.
31. We also had a trip to Dunoon. Quarriers had a house there. I can't remember how long we were there, maybe a couple of days. That was with Miss **QBJ**.
32. There was a farm. The older boys worked there. My brother worked there. The girls didn't. The girls worked in the laundry. That wasn't in Number 5, it

was a general laundry. It wasn't explained why the children had to work, that's just what happened. No one got paid.

33. My aunties would give me some pocket money and Miss **QBJ** said she would put it away, but I never saw it again. I don't know what happened to it.
34. They would maybe give me a sweetie or something. I ate them before Miss **QBJ** could take them.
35. You didn't have personal possessions, they weren't allowed. You had a locker, but there was nothing in it.
36. The second world war didn't make much of a difference, except that before it we used to get fruit one day a week and that was stopped.

### **Punishment**

37. If Miss **QBJ** was in a bad mood, you got the belt. Carrying on outside or upstairs, talking in bed, silly wee things would get you the belt. It depended what mood she was in.
38. She used it on me often. It happened to others as well, but I got it worst, I was the scapegoat. I was the pretty one, without being big-headed. It was a problem for her because she was an old maid. I suffered for it, because of my looks. I got more beltings than the others.
39. She would belt you on one hand then the other. You'd get maybe 2 or 3 on each hand. It depends what mood she was in. Sometimes you got put over her knee and you got it on the bare backside. You had to take your pants down. That happened quite a bit.
40. Another form of punishment was hard slapping on the left hand side of the head. This slapping took place on a regular basis. I left Quarriers stone deaf in my left ear.
41. I always had to wear shoes that were far too small. This was a type of punishment only given to me. My feet are terribly mis-shaped and gave me problems ever since.
42. If Miss **QAV** saw you moving in church, she would phone number 5 and report me. If you moved your head, she would report you. You would get the belt from Miss **QBJ**. The phone would go, and you were all looking at each other wondering who, and she would come in and say who it was and you got the belt. You went into the parlour and you got the belt. It would be just her and me. It wasn't just me, it was other girls too. If she was in a bad mood, she heated the belt in the fire to make it sting. We didn't know that at the time but when we got older we found out that that made it sting. It was a black leather belt, the same as what you got at school. It was sore. It didn't leave marks, but it left redness on your arms. I can't remember how long the redness was there, maybe about 4 days or something like that.

43. I mind a minister that I met in Glasgow telling me that he'd preached once in Quarriers. The church was big and full of children. He told me he couldn't believe there wasn't a movement, not a sound. It wasn't natural.
44. I spent most of my childhood on a chair under the stairs. If I spoke out of turn or did something to get in there, I sat many an hour in there. It was a wee dark cupboard, with a chair thing. I sat there for hours, sometimes in my nightie – I was frozen – because I spoke in bed. If you were upstairs, it was the landing. It was linoleum in those days and you sat in your nightie on the cold linoleum for hours. She'd come up and walk by you and go into her bed, and when she was in the mood she'd shout "Get to your bed.". By that time, you were frozen.
45. Some of them maybe wet the bed sometimes – they were just young. She wasn't so bad with some of them. She had favourites. If it was me, you had to strip the bed, take it down to the washhouse and wash it out. In my nightie.
46. There was one night when I was sick on the bed, all over the bed. She said "You can get up and take all that down to the washhouse". So I had to get up and strip my bed – I was only about 6 or 7 – and go down to the washhouse and stand there trying to run it under the tap. She came down and told me to leave it and get back to my bed. The washhouse was downstairs in Number 5, in the bathroom. By that time I was frozen. I went back to bed with no sheets and one wee blanket. At the back of my bed was a chimney. There used to be fireplaces. We never used them, but the wind used to come down the chimney. I was right in front of it and you could feel the draught. I was frozen, lying there.
47. That's when I ended up with double pneumonia in the hospital, very ill.
48. I didn't want to come out of the hospital. I loved it in the hospital. They put me into my bed in the sitting room where the nurses were. In these days, there was no central heating, so they put me in where the nurses would sit round the fire. It was lovely. And the nurses spoiled me. They were Quarriers nurses. I was in the hospital about 6 weeks, I think. That was the only time I was in the hospital.
49. Miss **QBJ** left Number 5 when I was about 11. She was shifted to this other house, and we got a Miss **\_\_\_\_\_**. She was nice. **\_\_\_\_\_** She never used the belt.
50. Miss **QBJ** never spoke nice, or kindly. It was "Get there", "Do that". You never got your name, even. It was "Get up the stairs", "Get to your bed", that sort of tone. She had a favourite, **\_\_\_\_\_** She was treated well, but that's because her mother was in there, brought up in Quarriers. She'd been with Miss **QBJ** and the mother left her child and wanted her to go to Miss **QBJ** So she was the favourite. So Miss **QBJ** treated her as the favourite. She got favouritism because of her mother. Christmas, when you went downstairs, she had a whole lot of presents and you maybe got one. I think

the presents were handed in, charity. Nothing very exciting anyway. Christmas wasn't really made into a special day. I can't mind getting a special meal, we just used to go to church.

51. There was no celebration on your birthday. You forgot that it was your birthday. It probably never dawned on us it was our birthday.
52. If you misbehaved, you never got any meal. I liked the food, it was good plain food. You had to eat it. Nobody would dare not eat it. If you didn't eat it, you got it at tea time. If you didn't eat it then, you got it for breakfast. That happened to me once. You just ate it – you just had to get it down.
53. You came home from school and into the bathroom to take your turn in the bath. You queued up, youngest first. It was all the same bathwater. If you were the last, it would be frozen.
54. I should imagine that the ones that were in charge knew what was happening. I think they were all doing the same. We were all treated the same. Miss QAV would know certainly, but I don't know about Dr Kelly. Miss QAV would send for you and give you the belt. I didn't get the belt from her, but some of them did, because they'd moved their head or something in church. She sent for them and they got the belt.

### Visitors

55. Two of my dad's sisters used to visit sometimes. Aunt [REDACTED] used to come now and again, and Aunt [REDACTED] came now and again but I didn't really know them. Visiting was only once a month. I saw them maybe once every two months, one or the other of them. I didn't tell them about Miss QBJ. It never dawned on me to tell them.
56. I didn't have any other visitors.

### Official visitors, inspectors

57. I never saw anyone official inspecting Quarriers.
58. I never saw anyone come in to see how the children were.
59. We didn't get visits from doctors or nurses to check how we were, or from anyone else to check how we were doing.

### Leaving Quarriers

60. Aunt [REDACTED] took me out when I was about 13. You left school at 14 in those days. She must have asked Quarriers to take me out. I think she wanted me to clean her house. Some of the girls who didn't have family went on to live in a flat in the village and stay working in the laundry after they left school, and stay there until they were pensioners.

61. I was just glad to get away. I didn't miss Quarriers at all. I was glad to see the back of it. I had freedom. Everything you did in there was "Do this", "Do that". You didn't think about it at the time, because you didn't know any different.
62. I don't think I ever thought about whether I was safe there. You're just a child, you just get through every day. It was a regime. You got up and did this, that and the next thing. It was a kind of regime, the life there.
63. My brother rescued me from Aunt [REDACTED] my oldest brother, [REDACTED]. He was very clever, and if you were very clever in Quarriers they sent you to Paisley Grammar school to do your Highers. He was still living in Quarriers, he travelled back and forth. He left at a certain age. The science teacher there took an interest in him. They got pally. [REDACTED] came up to Aunt [REDACTED]s to visit me one day and I was covered in black lead from leading a range in her flat and he wasn't very happy, so he told this teacher and they got me out of there and got me a job in a children's home in Paisley. On my day off, I would visit the science teacher, Mr [REDACTED] and his wife. I was quite happy after that.

#### Previous statements or reports

64. I spoke to people at the Apex hotel in Edinburgh, about 12 years ago or maybe longer. It's been 12 years since I moved to where I'm living now and it was before that, when I was living in Dysart. I don't know who organised it; I just took it that it was organised by the government. People stood up and told what happened. Some got emotional and ran out. There was quite a lot of people there, talking about their experiences. There were two elderly men – a lot older than me, so they'll be gone now – and I was asking them if they knew my brothers in Quarriers. It was a woman that was on the platform.
65. There was a smaller group meeting in Buckhaven. My memory's not that great.
66. Then two other people came to my house. I told them the detail, what happened to me, but I never heard anything further. I think they were from the government. That was round about the same time. I imagine it was all connected, because people were all sitting up and starting to take notice. It was called Time to be Heard. The name Tom Shaw rings a bell. I think the meetings were all connected. The Apex was probably to do with that, and the people that came to see me. I had to tell them what happened to me. I never heard anything after that.
67. I thought what I told them would be on record. I saw something in the paper asking people to come forward to the Inquiry and I thought "I went forward about ten years ago!". I couldn't believe it.
68. I didn't tell anyone about the beatings and Miss [REDACTED] QBJ at the time they happened. You just learned to live with it.

69. I haven't told the police. How could I speak to the police? I never thought to. I don't know if anybody would. You'd have to prove it as well.

70. I've never been to a lawyer but I'm thinking about it now.

### Records

71. I never tried to recover my records.

### Compensation

72. Why is Scotland so behind other countries? Europe paid out, so did Ireland, so did England. So what's up with Scotland? We're not getting anywhere. It's not something Scotland's proud of.

### Thoughts now about Miss QBJ

73. I just hate her. She's just a horrible woman. She shouldn't have been allowed near children.

74. There was nothing nice about her. She wasn't gentle or kind or anything. She was a bitter old spinster.

75. They got their job through the church. Good Christian women. I didn't know that at the time, but when you get older and look back, you hear rumours.

### Impact

76. It's hard to say how my time in Quarriers affected me. I was just glad to get out, to get freedom.

77. I used to think back on it, but not now. I used to wonder how a woman who treated you that way got that job. Looking after children when she was a nasty person. I would like an answer to that.

78. Having said that, it was a very healthy place to live, in the country. You got good plain food – that was the upside – and a good education.

79. I came from the Gorbals, so it was a much better atmosphere and surroundings. That was the upside. But I was probably happier in the Gorbals. You were with your mum and dad. You maybe didn't have much but you had that. It's sad that your childhood's been ruined by some bitter old spinster, it's not nice. She should never have been allowed near children.

80. I've been back to Quarriers. I took my oldest son down with me, to show him where I was brought up. My other son was in the army at the time. They're all private houses now.



81. 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 to be true.

Signed:

QCJ

Dated:

18.5.2016.