

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

## Witness Statement of

MBD

Support person present: No

1. My name is MBD. I am known as MBD. My surname when I was born was MBD. My date of birth is 1951. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

**Life before going into care**

2. I was adopted when I was two years old. I was born in Glasgow and I have since found out that my natural mother gave me up when I was a baby. I spent my first two years in care, but I do not know where and have no memory of that.
3. I grew up in Wishaw with my adopted parents, my older brother and my younger sister. was fifteen months older than me and about two years younger. I was the last one in the house, and had been adopted as babies before me. I got on well with my brother and sister, although they didn't get on with each other. Mum and dad were very religious and I was brought up a Catholic.
4. Dad was the in Wishaw and I would describe my life with them as terrible. Mum never liked me. I never realised it at the time, but I got a lot of feedback from my brother and sister later on in life about how bad they felt about me getting beaten for things that they had done. I just thought it was the norm then.

5. My first school was [REDACTED] and I went there till I was eight. My brother had been sent to St Columba's College boarding school in Largs when he was about nine and I was sent a year later. I was glad to be going to boarding school.
6. I don't remember much about a lot of St Columba's College. I struggle to remember faces and I can't put names to the faces I do remember. I got treatment for drug and alcohol addiction about twenty-three years ago and a guy that was there asked me if I recognised him. He had been at St Columba's at the same time as me, but I couldn't remember him at all.
7. There was another guy, [REDACTED] who was known as my [REDACTED] who had also gone to St Columba's at the same time as me. I couldn't remember him being there either and yet I can remember playing with him both before and after.

#### **St Columba's College, Largs**

8. St Columba's College was a small and expensive private boarding school for boys between eight and twelve. It was run by the Marist Brothers, who also ran St Joseph's College in Dumfries and funded St Mungo's Academy in Glasgow.
9. The college was in a massive house on several levels. There were four dormitories, three on the first floor and one on the floor above. Next to the dorm on the top floor were the toilets and showers.
10. There were only twenty-eight boys at St Columba's with eight or nine in each class. After boys left there they would go on to St Joseph's College. It was meant as a prelim to making boys into priests.
11. There were four brothers looking after us in school and teaching us. One was called Brother <sup>MJD</sup>[REDACTED] and he was <sup>SNR</sup>[REDACTED]. Another monk was a brother prefect who looked after the older boys out of school hours. He also did a bit teaching as well. He was called Brother Germanus and had a room on the top floor, next to the toilets.

He must have been about forty and his hair was getting a bit thin. There was also a cook called Frank and a matron who looked after the younger boys. They were the only lay people at the school. The matron lived in a house in the grounds.

### **Routine at St Columba's College, Largs**

#### *Mornings and bedtime*

12. The dormitory on the top floor was for that year's intake, the youngest boys. After the first year, the youngest ones moved down to the other dorms on the first floor.

#### *Washing and Bathing*

13. The toilets and bathroom were on the top floor and we would get a bath once a week. It was a big room with about seven sinks all around it and a bath as well. The toilet was in a separate room.
14. The matron looked after the younger boys in the first year and she would wash and bath us. [REDACTED] she didn't do anything to me because I fought back. She was horrible, the only time she was nice to you was when she was bathing you.
15. The matron used to think spitting was disgusting and would make us swallow our toothpaste. She would always be standing over us when we were getting washed and brushing our teeth.

#### *Food*

16. I don't remember anything specific about the food.

*School*

17. Schooldays were just the same as everywhere else, except we were taught in the building by the brothers.

*Holidays*

18. We would go home for the school holidays, back to mum and dad in Wishaw.

*Sport and leisure time*

19. I remember after school sometimes Brother Germanus would take us to this hut in the college grounds and we would do boxing. Other times he might take us for a walk up the golf course or onto the beach, or we would do stuff on the big playing fields in front of the school. The rest of our leisure time is all very vague though.

*Birthdays and Christmas*

20. My birthday is at Christmas and I would always be home in Wishaw for it. I can remember other people getting a cake when it was their birthday though. One time, I leant on the box that a cake was in and damaged the cake.

*Visits/Inspections*

21. Mum and dad would come up to visit on a Sunday, though not every week. I don't remember any inspections of the place.

*Contact with siblings*

22. I can remember my brother being there when I first went to St Columba's, but I don't remember having much contact with him during my time there. I think our time together there only overlapped by about a year.



*Bed wetting*

23. I had a problem with bed wetting throughout my time at St Columba's. In the first year, if I wet the bed, the matron would "have a go" at me in front of everybody. Everyone knew about it, she would be shouting at me. I was used to getting shouted at by my mother, but it was embarrassing.
24. When I was in the older boys' dorms, my mattress would get taken out into the landing outside all the rooms and would get turned up to air off. Everybody would see it, although I don't remember any of them making much of it.

*Discipline*

25. There was corporal punishment at St Columba's college, but it was organised. By that I mean that if you did something wrong, the brothers told you and then would tell you what your punishment was going to be. It could be six of the belt or whatever. You would get it and that would be that. I didn't see it as overly severe because at home I was randomly beaten. It didn't matter at home if I had done anything wrong or not.

**Abuse at St Columba's College, Largs**

26. When I was in the dorms on the middle floor, from when I was about ten years old, Brother Germanus started taking me into his room at night when I wet the bed. That's how the abuse all came about.
27. I had wet the bed one time and woke up in the middle of the night. I don't know if Brother Germanus had come down to check on us, or if I went and told him. My pyjamas were obviously wet so he told me to go into his room to dry off in front of the fire. His room was on the top floor, beside the toilets.

28. He gave me a sweet and I sat on the floor in front of the fire. It was unusual for me having an adult being nice to me.
29. He came and sat next to me. He was wearing a dressing gown and when he sat down with his legs open, I could see he had nothing on under it. He tried to make everything normal and told me he had varicose veins so he couldn't wear pyjamas. He didn't rape me, but he coerced me and he abused me.
30. He told me to go into bed and got in beside me. He said he had a rash and asked me to put cream on his privates. He was basically getting me to masturbate him. He told me there was nothing wrong, but not to tell anyone about it because people wouldn't understand.
31. This happened on a few occasions when he would wake me up through the night to go to the toilet and tell me to go through to his room. I would go up there for the attention. He touched me too, but I was too young to know what he was doing. This went on until my last year at St Columba's when I got moved out of the dorm. I think Brother Germanus must have got somebody else by then.

### **Leaving St Columba's College, Largs**

32. My brother was moved to the higher school, St Joseph's College in Dumfries when he was about eleven. I did an extra year at St Columba's and got moved down to a little room on my own. I was made [REDACTED] because by that time I had been at St Columba's the longest. That made me feel quite good. I got a bit of acclaim for that and it was a position I could fulfil. My bed wetting stopped then. I was getting attention because I was [REDACTED].
33. The room I got moved to on my own was on the bottom floor under the stairs. Frank the chef told me to be careful and not let anyone in the room. He wasn't saying much, but I now think that other boys who had been staying in that room had been getting abused by Brother <sup>MJD</sup> [REDACTED] and Frank maybe knew.

34. My brother told me later on that I hadn't done well in the qualifying exam for St Joseph's. I had one of the highest IQs in the school and they made me resit the IQ test because they thought I had cheated. He had been told this by my mum and dad, they never told me anything about that.
35. My brother had been getting in a bit of trouble at St Joseph's and they thought that he might calm down a bit if I moved there. I was only there for about six months though before we both got chucked out because he hadn't changed.

### **Reporting of abuse at St Columba's College, Largs**

36. I have never talked to anyone about being abused at St Columba's and have never reported it. I have always felt that I was blamed for what happened to me there. My brother later told me that he had found out that I had been up in Brother Germanus' room. He said he told my parents and when I came home from school one day they had a go at me. They were standing over me, pointing and accusing me. When I admitted I had been up in his room, they just left me there. They were angry, I thought at me, and I felt dirty and horrible.
37. My brother tried to encourage me to report what had happened to me about fifteen years ago. I wasn't aware of it, but he said there had been some sort of exposé about the school. He said they had been trying to encourage anyone who had been abused to get in touch and that there was some sort of financial comeback at the time. I wasn't ready to do it then though. I had never told him any detail of what happened, he just knew I'd been going up to Brother Germanus' room.
38. Our local church was called [REDACTED] and I know my parents must have told the priest there, [REDACTED]. They were so religious they told him everything. When the Pope came over about six years ago I found [REDACTED] and asked him over the phone if he knew I had been abused at the college. He didn't seem surprised

and didn't show any concern and just told me to stay strong. When I thought about it, that was not what he was meaning, he was telling me to keep quiet.

39. I tried to get in touch after that with St Joseph's College to speak to them about it, but I couldn't get through. St Columba's was closed by this stage. I knew they would just palm me off anyway.

### **St Joseph's College, Dumfries**

40. St Joseph's was another boarding school run by the Marist brothers, but was much bigger. There were two hundred boys there and it was like a high school.

### **Routine at St Joseph's College, Dumfries**

41. I don't remember how many dormitories were there. Boys would have been grouped into dorms according to age and I think there would have been brother prefects looking after us there too.
42. I remember a big dining hall at St Joseph's where we would get breakfast before going into classes.
43. The school was part of St Joseph's and we got the usual high school subjects. I studied French while I was there.
44. I can't remember how we spent our time outside school hours.

### ***Discipline***

45. The monks at St Joseph's were quite strict, like St Columba's, as they were in those days. I remember my brother telling me later that he once got "six of the best on his under-panted bottom", after getting into trouble one time. Sometimes you would get

the belt with your trousers on, sometimes with them off. To me that was part of the regimen and that was okay. If you did something wrong, you got punished and that was that. There was never an occasion when I was disciplined that I hadn't done something wrong.

### **Leaving St Joseph's College, Dumfries**

46. Both my brother and I got taken out of St Joseph's because of his behaviour. Family life when I got home was even worse. Mum would wind my dad up to beat me.
47. I started in the local school in Wishaw, [REDACTED] and was there from thirteen until just before my fifteenth birthday. I was lucky and settled in pretty well at [REDACTED] I see that time as being when the "spring started to recoil", my behaviour changed and I started being naughty.
48. My parents sent me to a children's guidance clinic in Glasgow that was run by nuns. They told the school that I would be going there every Tuesday. I only went there for a couple of weeks and they decided there was nothing wrong with me, I was just a bit hyperactive. They asked to see my mother but she wouldn't go and nobody told the school. For about a year-and-a-half after that I just kept taking the Tuesday off.
49. The school and my parents eventually found out and I got my head split open for it. My father was waiting round the corner in the kitchen when I came home and my mother asked me how I'd got on at school. When I said "fine" he appeared from behind the door with a big stick and split my head open.
50. My behaviour had been getting worse at school, I put a teacher up against the wall and told him I would see him outside the school at four o'clock. After that they wouldn't take me back, but they didn't want to expel me because my dad was the [REDACTED] My dad then got me signed up for the army. I was supposed to be in the army for twelve years, but I was only in for just under a year.

**Life after being in care**

51. I was in the army from when I was fifteen for just under a year. They said I was unsuitable. After I left, I returned to Wishaw and worked as a furniture salesman for about a year. The company I worked for also trained me in carpet fitting and upholstery.
52. I left home when I was about seventeen and stayed in Bellshill for a short time before I moved to London and eventually started working as a carpet fitter there.
53. I met a woman and we had two daughters together. We got married in 1979 when they were seven and five and they were our bridesmaids. They are now forty-five and forty-three and have two children themselves each. My oldest grandson, [REDACTED] now has a child of his own.
54. My wife and I were together for thirteen years but split up because of my alcohol abuse. I had been drinking since I stayed in Wishaw with my parents and would steal it from their cocktail cabinet. I only noticed it was a problem when I was with my wife. Obviously she wanted the attention the drink was getting and I was just getting worse. It's only when you try to stop or curtail something that you realise it is a problem.
55. I also dabbled in drugs recreationally in the sixties, cannabis and LSD, but I stopped doing that when I met my wife. When I left my missus I started taking heavier drugs, cocaine and heroin or whatever. I abused alcohol and drugs from about 1983 to 1994.
56. During that time, I got involved in crime and did time in prison for card fraud and other things. Eventually I got three-and-a-half years for armed robbery. I realised I was going to have to stop the drugs and alcohol to get out of the lifestyle.

57. Through a really good probation officer, I went to a treatment centre called [REDACTED] near Bristol. I stopped taking anything in [REDACTED] 1994 and I have been clean since. I got counselling then, but I never mentioned my abuse.
58. I moved to Bournemouth after leaving [REDACTED] but wasn't able to work because of problems I was having with my back. I'd fallen out of a tree when I was young and have had problems since.
59. My relationship with my daughters had also broken down, but eventually I patched it up again. They both stay in [REDACTED] and my oldest daughter is now a [REDACTED] councillor. We are in regular contact, though I have never mentioned the abuse to them.

### **Impact**

60. I almost blame myself for what happened to me. The way I see it is that if I hadn't wanted the attention, it wouldn't have happened. I find it hard to think of myself as the child that I was at the time and not put myself as an adult in that situation. If I wasn't ashamed of it I'm sure I would find it easier to speak about. I know I need to get rid of the embarrassment I feel and realise that I was just a child, but it's not easy.
61. Brother Germanus was very clever and manipulative in his coercing of me. He tried to naturalise the situation. At the same time, he told me I couldn't tell anybody. He made me feel wanted, which was a big thing for me. That's why I feel guilty now, I wanted to be wanted by an adult. I felt separate from the other boys, I had this special relationship with the brother prefect.
62. I believe the abuse I suffered along with my upbringing went a long way toward my alcohol and drug abuse. My whole life has been full of insecurity. I've always felt I was different and find it hard to have proper conversations with anyone. The alcohol gave me the courage to do so and took that fear away.

63. I have a lot of anger and violence in me and have felt that way since I was thirteen or fourteen. I have always blanked things out and would get aggressive with anyone that came near me. That was my defence.

### **Records**

64. I've never made any attempt to get my records from my time in care and have never seen any.
65. I got in touch with Barnardos in Edinburgh about twenty years ago and a woman there, [REDACTED] made some enquiries for me. She got my birth certificate and my mum was on it. She had been born in 1929.
66. About six months later [REDACTED] heard from my real aunt that my natural mother was still alive. My mother got in touch with the agency after that, saying she was pleased I had got in touch. She told [REDACTED] that her parents had made her give me up and I had been put in a home as soon as I was born.
67. She also told [REDACTED] that my father was still alive, though didn't give his name and said she hadn't married him. As far as I know from what [REDACTED] had found out, my mother went on to marry someone else and they had two daughters and a son. That was all within eighteen months of me coming along.
68. She said she would love to see me, but that she was going into hospital for a minor operation. I never heard anything and got back in touch with [REDACTED] It came back that she didn't want to see me after all.

### **Other information**



69. The guy I met at the drug and alcohol counselling sessions, [REDACTED] had been talking about being abused as well. At first I thought he was meaning by Brother Germanus, but then he told me it was Brother MJD [REDACTED]. He had obviously been at it as well. He was confused about his sexuality, possibly because of the abuse he had suffered and he eventually committed suicide.

70. [REDACTED]

71. When I was sixteen or seventeen, I returned to Largs for a daytrip. I decided to go up to St Columba's and when I did, Brother MJD [REDACTED] answered the door. He looked at me and said "Oh it's Brother Germanus you want to see" and went to get him. It was like he must have thought I was there to confront him. I was shown into an empty room and Brother Germanus came in. I hadn't expected him to still be there, I thought he would have been disciplined and would be away.

72. I hope the Inquiry can help to make sure this doesn't happen to anybody else. To any degree. There should be things put in place to prevent these people from manipulating vulnerable children. Brother Germanus could obviously pick out that I was vulnerable and that I didn't have a happy life at home. I believe if I had had a confident relationship with my parents it would never have happened, he would have picked somebody else. Predators such as him seem to be able to see that.

73. 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..... MBD [REDACTED] .....

Dated..... 20.3.18 .....