

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GMV

Support person present. No

1. My name is GMV. My date of birth is 1958. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I was born in Glasgow. My mum and dad were and according to my birth certificate my father's name was. The man who I knew as my father was in fact my step father. He wasn't there when I was a young boy. I just remember living with my mum and one of my sisters in Parkhead, Glasgow and going to church and bible class on a Sunday. One day we moved into another house with a bigger family. This was my step father and his children. Altogether there were about twelve children and some of them were close to the same age as my mother. I was the only one that went into care. I was my step father's favourite child and I got on okay with all the other children. Life at home was pretty good and I was happy. My mum subsequently left my step father and I moved with her to Bridgeton in Glasgow. My brother and I joined the army cadet force. I would have been twelve.
3. I was going to Strathclyde Primary School and at some point I got in tow with a couple of, for want of a better word, scallywags. I started skipping school with them. We would go into the school, register, then leave straight away. I remember a

teacher coming to the house to speak to me. She was Miss Gray or Grahame. I was warned what would happen if I didn't go to school. There were no children's panel at this time and I ended up going to a juvenile court. My mum got me all cleaned up and I was spick and span. We went to the juvenile court in Ingram Street, Glasgow in front of this big judge. I didn't understand what they were saying or what was going on. I still wasn't going to school and I had also been given a stolen pedal cycle. From there I was sent straight to Larchgrove remand unit for seven days detention. From my list of previous convictions I was at the juvenile court on [REDACTED] 1968 so was only nine years old. I was taken to Larchgrove in an old van along with some other boys.

### **Larchgrove Remand Home, Glasgow**

4. Larchgrove was a two storey building and everything was in one big unit. I was in a dorm of around twelve other boys. There were four or five dorms and they were all on the ground floor. The place was packed with boys. The kitchen was on the first floor and the workshops were on the ground floor. These were for the boys who were there for longer. The age range was from my age, which was nine up to fourteen. I can't remember the names of any of the staff at Larchgrove.

### **Routine at Larchgrove Remand Home**

#### *First day*

5. I was introduced to the staff, shown round and told what I would be doing when I was there. That was when the rules of Larchgrove were explained to me. I can't remember who did this. It was only when someone explained that I was going to be there for a wee while that it sunk in what was happening and I felt like my world had collapsed. I was also told that if I kept myself to myself and behaved I would be okay. That was basically what I tried to do.

### *Mornings and bedtime*

6. We were woken up about 7:30 am and we got washed, dressed then went down for breakfast. There was a night watchman who walked round at night with a torch.

### *Mealtimes/Food*

7. Meal times were in little cubicles up on the first floor and each had about four seats in them. There weren't enough seats for everyone so it was done on a rotation basis. Only about twenty boys could eat at the one time. Breakfast was usually cornflakes served with warm milk. I can't remember much about the other meals. If there was food that was served that you didn't like you just didn't eat it. You weren't given anything else and you just went hungry. There was no punishment if you left any food.

### *Washing/bathing*

8. We had showers on a Wednesday and a Saturday. It was in a big area that we showered and there were no cubicles, curtains or anything like that to shower in private. Staff supervised us and I think that was just to make sure there was no mucking about.

### *Clothing/uniform/Leisure time*

9. I can't remember what clothes I wore when I was there but I think I just wore my own. There was no football or any other recreational activity outside the building. We were kept indoors practically all day.

### *Schooling*

10. After breakfast we would go to the gymnasium or some of the older boys went to work. I was too young to work. There were no school classes and no education at all. We just sat in the gym all day in a line. There was no sport organised and there was

nothing arranged for us to do. There were staff there and they just stood in the corners and watched us. We weren't even allowed to talk. We just had to sit there. We went for lunch then went straight back to the gym where we did the same thing. If anyone spoke they were pulled out of their line and made to stand in the corner facing the wall.

#### *Healthcare*

11. I think I was seen by medical staff when I arrived. They checked my height and weight then I had stuff put on my hair to make sure I didn't have any head lice. I didn't have the need to see any medical staff again when I was there.

#### *Work*

12. We had to keep our bed space clean and tidy. On a Saturday morning we had to polish the floors using the big bumpers. Everyone took a turn doing that.

#### *Bed Wetting*

13. I never wet the bed but I saw what happened to the boys that did. They were punished and embarrassed.

#### *Visitors / Discipline*

14. My mum came to visit me on a Wednesday and she was with me for about half an hour. Staff were always present supervising us. Larchgrove was run like an army camp. They would shout just to humiliate and degrade you. I quickly learned to keep myself to myself and just watch from a distance.

#### *Running away*

15. It wasn't possible to run away from Larchgrove because all the doors were locked. The dormitory doors were locked at night too.

### *Good memories*

16. In all the institutions I have been there was usually something that happened in every place that was a good memory. I don't have any good memories from Larchgrove.

### **Abuse at Larchgrove Remand Home**

17. I didn't wet the bed. If the staff in the morning found that someone had wet their bed they were slapped to the side of the head. The wet bedding was then rubbed into their faces then they were paraded down to the laundry carrying their wet sheets. All the other boys could see and knew they had wet the bed. I don't know the names of the staff that did this.
18. I saw quite a few boys getting skelped by staff on the side of the head if they had done something they weren't supposed to or if they did something stupid. Sometimes they would be grabbed round the neck. It never happened to me because I kept myself to myself and tried to behave.

### **Leaving Larchgrove remand home**

19. I was told the night before that I was leaving the following day. My mum came for me and we got the bus home.

### **Life back at home**

20. I was back home for a while and I went back to school but the next month I got into bother and got charged by the police with theft by housebreaking. I had picked up an object which I subsequently found out was a railway detonator used to stop runaway trains. I had seen other boys drop it. They must have broken into a railway hut and

stolen them. I threw a brick at it and it exploded. I was later interviewed by the police but my mum had told me not to name anyone else involved so I took the blame. I again went back to the juvenile court in Ingram Street with my mum.

21. What happened at the court is all a bit hazy to me. I was taken downstairs from the court on my own by a big policeman and I was put in a cage. I freaked out and I started ripping my clothes off until I was only wearing pants. A policeman came and asked what was wrong. He said my mum was still in the building and he would go and get her and she was brought in. It was explained to me then that I was going to an approved school for between one and three years.

#### **Larchgrove remand home second visit.**

22. I was taken back to Larchgrove and I think I was only there about eight days. I was there until a place became available at Balgowan. Larchgrove was just the same as it had been the first time I was in there. At the end of my time at Larchgrove a teacher from Balgowan came and picked me up in a car and drove me to Balgowan approved school in Dundee. I think it was Mr <sup>GNA</sup> [REDACTED]. It was a long journey and it felt like I was in that car for hours.

#### **Balgowan School, Dundee**

23. Balgowan had a long driveway through a massive estate. There was a big dining room on the ground floor. There was another separate unit called the special unit. All the 'goody, goody' boys got to stay there. They got to do lots of different things and different treats that the rest of the boys didn't get. I was never in this special unit. There must have been about 120 boys in total in Balgowan. I was one of the youngest boys there at 9 and the oldest boys would have been about 16. The dorm I was in had about 20 boys in it. At one point I was moved into a dorm with older boys but I am not sure why. There was a rumour when I arrived that a boy had hung himself in the bell tower and that it was now haunted. The dorm I was moved to was

near the bell tower so I was petrified for weeks in this new dorm. This dorm was also closer to the night watchman so it could have been so that he could keep his eye on me and stop me from absconding.

24. The school was run by landlords and a board of governors. The <sup>SNR</sup> [REDACTED] was <sup>GNF</sup> [REDACTED]. The <sup>SNR</sup> [REDACTED] was Mr <sup>LIF</sup> [REDACTED], then <sup>SNR</sup> [REDACTED] was Mr <sup>LSB</sup> [REDACTED]. The secretary was Gill Ireland and the matron was Muriel McKenzie. The other staff I remember were Mr <sup>GNB</sup> [REDACTED], Mr <sup>GNA</sup> [REDACTED], <sup>ERM</sup> [REDACTED] and <sup>GMZ</sup> [REDACTED]. They were often there in the evening as well as in the school classes.
25. Balgowan was run like a military establishment. There were lots of parades on the square, rain, hail or shine. You were sometimes left standing out there for hours.

### **Routine at Balgowan School**

#### *First day*

26. I was taken into the building and I met Mr <sup>LIF</sup> [REDACTED] <sup>SNR</sup> [REDACTED] on my own. He took me into his office and he was talking to me. I had no idea what he was saying and couldn't take anything in because I felt numb and didn't know where I was or what was happening. He said something about me keeping myself to myself, and not get into any trouble and I would be okay. I was then taken from there and given a uniform to put on and shown my dorm where I would be sleeping.

#### *Mornings and bedtime*

27. We were woken up about 7:30 am, had a quick wash then went down for breakfast at 8:00 am. Lights out at night was around 9:00 pm or 9:30 pm. It might have been a bit later for the older boys. Whenever the boys left the dorms in the morning the doors were locked. They were re-opened about 4:00 pm in the afternoon.

### *Mealtimes/Food*

28. The food was good. At breakfast we had porridge and a slice of bread apart from sometimes we got cornflakes. If you didn't like porridge you just ate the bread. All the other meals were okay. If there was food you didn't like you just didn't eat it. I was quite a picky eater so quite often swapped food with other boys. No-one was ever punished or forced to eat their food. Staff were supposed to be supervising but they just stood about chatting.

### *Washing/bathing*

29. We had showers on a Wednesday or a Thursday. The showers were in one big area and the staff generally supervised us. The older boys showered at a different time. For some reason we were sometimes supervised by an electrician, painter and a boiler-man. The painter was Mr <sup>IDH</sup> the boiler-man, Mr <sup>GRZ</sup>. Looking back I am not sure why they would be supervising us, especially in the showers. Often they were there at night supervising us too when we were watching the television. I never figured out why they were there but maybe they were just short of staff.

### *Clothing/uniform*

30. The uniform I was given was grey shorts, white shirt, red jumper, socks and leather shoes. Everyone wore the same uniform. My own clothes were locked away.

### *Leisure time/ Trips and holidays/ Good memories*

31. In the evening we could watch the television or play games. I didn't get involved with the others very much because I was too busy planning my next escape. We went on a few trips when I was at Balgowan. We went to London for a couple of weeks and I enjoyed it, especially travelling through Devon. Another trip was up in the Highlands to Glenhead lodge. I enjoyed these trips and these are good memories.



### *Schooling/work*

32. I had been told that I had been sent to Balgowan to get an education. After breakfast every morning we were told what we were allocated to do that day. We might go to a workshop or to a classroom. It was usually classroom through the week and workshop at the weekend. I was always in the same class. One of the teachers was <sup>ERM</sup> [REDACTED] and I had him most of the time. I liked him and he taught us about nature and things like that. Another teacher was <sup>GMZ</sup> [REDACTED] and he taught English. There was another teacher Mr Patterson who had a cleft lip. Overall I think the quality of education was good to an extent. After lunch we often had physical exercise.
33. I was too young to work. The only work I did was on a Saturday and Sunday. It started off I did small jobs like tidying or cleaning, and sometimes cleaning up the playground.

### *Healthcare*

34. There was a sick bay where you went to see the matron Muriel McKenzie. She was a really nice woman. There was another older matron there but I can't remember her name. After breakfast if you weren't feeling well you would wait in a line to see the matron. I remember one time I was taken to the dentist because I had issues with a tooth. That tooth was removed by the dentist and I remember it well because I wasn't given any anaesthetic.

### *Religious instruction*

35. On Sundays we had to put on our Sunday best clothes and walk to church which was outside the grounds. We wore a red tunic, grey jumper, white shirt, grey flannel trousers and a dark blue coat. There was an inspection before we left to make sure we were spick and span. I don't remember any religious instruction at any other time.

### *Work*

36. The dorm was allocated to certain boys and it was their job to keep the dorm clean and tidy and the floor waxed. All I had to do was keep my locker clean and tidy and my bed space tidy.

### *Birthdays and Christmas*

37. Everyone got home for Christmas leave so it wasn't celebrated in Balgowan. I think I got home at Christmas for about ten days. On the lead up to Christmas there were decorations up and tinsel on a tree. I don't remember my birthday ever being celebrated.

### *Personal possessions*

38. I had a locker that I could keep stuff in but it didn't have a lock. The only thing I had was a wee radio. Quite often things would go missing and the staff would be aware but it was difficult to catch those responsible.

### *Bed Wetting*

39. I am not aware of bed wetting being an issue at Balgowan. I am not sure if anyone wet the bed or if they did how the staff dealt with it.

### *Visitors*

40. Because my mum lived so far away she only managed to come every six weeks or so and she came on her own. ERM had taught me how to write letters so I wrote to my mum and she wrote back. I knew, because they told me, that they would read the letters before they were sent and the replies from my mum had been opened and obviously been read before I received them. I didn't see a social worker all the time I was there.

## Review of care / detention

41. As far as I knew I was going to be there between one and three years. No one ever sat down with me and told me how long I would be there for or gave me any inclination as to what was happening. I wasn't there to be assessed, I was supposedly there to get an education.

## *Discipline*

42. They had a book where they recorded good and bad behaviour for every pupil in the school. We were inspected before we went to church on a Sunday. If you weren't clean and tidy a bad report was recorded in the book. At the end of the month they balanced the good reports against the bad reports. If it was bad reading you missed a visit from family the next month or a weekend leave. It encouraged the boys to behave. This book was held in the secretary's office. Once a week you would be told by the matron Muriel McKenzie about the reports that had been recorded for you. When I didn't go back after weekend leave they normally removed some privileges or stopped some of my future home leave.

## *Weekend leave*

43. If I didn't have bad reports I got weekend leave. I didn't get it straight away and had been there about four months before it started. Before I got weekend leave I was allowed out on an afternoon leave. This meant I could go into Dundee city centre and I was allowed out on my own. They even gave me some money. When I got weekend leave I went home to my mum's. I had to get the bus to the train station then the train to Glasgow, then a bus home. Even though I was only nine I had to make this journey on my own.

## *Running away*

44. I was a prolific absconder and if there was a record for the most times anyone ran away I would have held that record. When I was home for weekend leave I just

decided not to go back. As far as my mum knew I was going back and I never told her otherwise. I wouldn't have got her involved because at that time she could have been prosecuted for harbouring me. The first she would know was when the police turned up at her door looking for me. I usually stayed with some of my friends whose parents didn't know I was in an approved school. I was caught when the police stopped me for a routine check and would be taken to the police station where I would wait for the staff to pick me up. The first time I ran away I was severely punished. I never heard about any of the other boys who ran away getting punished like I was.

45. Because of that beating it changed my attitude about running away. It made me all the more determined not to get caught. It changed my mind set and I made every effort not to get caught by the police. When we were taken out on day excursions if there was any chance of running off I would. I ran away when we were on a trip to Edinburgh, and another time when we were in London. I was caught in London after a couple of hours and was held in a remand unit until the staff came for me.
46. When I ran away I would never go back to my house for fear of getting my mother into trouble with the police. I would see my brothers or sisters in the street and they would tell my mum where I was and what I was doing. I then stayed with my friends. I was usually caught within a couple of weeks, not any longer. Sometimes I actually wanted to get caught because I was fed up.

*Good memories*

47. Muriel McKenzie the matron was a good woman. After I got the severe hammering from Mr <sup>LIF</sup> and Mr <sup>LSB</sup> she kept me under her wing and looked after me. She treated my injuries and she gave me jobs and tasks to do to keep me occupied. She took me in to the office and Gill Ireland had obviously been told by the matron what had happened to me. After that Gill Ireland was good to me too. She made sure I got my weekend leave. These were the only two females in the school and because of them I calmed down and just got on with it. I had been traumatised by the incident but they did their best to help me.

## Abuse at Balgowan School

48. <sup>GMZ</sup> [REDACTED], the English teacher, regularly slapped boys on the side of the head for silly things like running in the corridors. I knew to steer clear of him. <sup>GMZ</sup> [REDACTED], the English teacher, was like a volcano and all off a sudden would explode. Sometimes he skelped boys on the side of their heads if they did something like running in the corridor. His favourite was to grab boys by the lapels and drag them into the corner and make them stand there facing the wall. Other times he would throw things at boys in the classroom. One time he threw a set of keys and it hit a boy on his head and cut him. He was sent to matron to get treatment. Everyone sat in fear in his class and often you would be able to hear a pin drop.
49. After being there about six months I had been on weekend leave and didn't go back. The police caught me and I was collected from the police station by a member of staff called Mr <sup>GNA</sup> [REDACTED]. He chatted to me all the way back and he seemed to be a really nice guy. When I got back nothing else was said about me running away. The next day I was told when I was in the playground that I was to go to the matron's sick bay. I went in and the door was shut behind me. There were a few other staff in there and I started to panic. <sup>SNR</sup> [REDACTED] Mr <sup>LIF</sup> [REDACTED] then told me that I was going to be punished for running away and bringing the police to the school.
50. The next thing I remember was being on the examination table lying on my front. My trousers and pants were at my ankles. Other members of staff were holding me. Two were holding my shoulders and another two were holding my feet. They were Mr <sup>GNB</sup> [REDACTED], Mr <sup>GNA</sup> [REDACTED], Mr <sup>GNC</sup> [REDACTED] and I think the other holding me was Mr <sup>LSB</sup> [REDACTED], <sup>SNR</sup> [REDACTED] <sup>SNR</sup> [REDACTED]. Mr <sup>LIF</sup> [REDACTED] then started beating me with a thick leather strap that had a split at the end. Mr <sup>LIF</sup> [REDACTED] was about 85 years of age and the first few strikes hit my backside but then he started missing and was hitting my back. It was agony.
51. Mr <sup>LSB</sup> [REDACTED] then suggested that he take over and he then hit me with the belt and he was leathering my bare backside. I became numb to what was going on because of the pain and I couldn't say how many times I was hit. I was screaming for my mother

and was distraught. I was still nine when this happened. They were like a pack of wolves attacking a lamb.

52. When they finished, the men left the room and the matron Muriel McKenzie treated the weals on my back with cream. She was trying to console me. She was crying and kept saying to me that what had happened was wrong. I didn't understand what she was meaning but I know now. I thought at the time that this must have been normal punishment if you were bad. I thought it was done to use me as an example to all the other boys. This only ever happened once to me and I never heard about it happening to anyone else.
53. Muriel McKenzie treated the weals on my back for a few weeks. Because my backside and back were so sore I couldn't sit down or lie on my back in my bed. It was like that for weeks, maybe even months. Once the matron paid an interest in me after my beating and after Gill Ireland knew I had someone to speak to and confide in. Up until then I felt very alone.
54. After the incident when I was beaten all the other teachers shunned me and treated me differently. At one point my whole class were made to stand on the parade square for an hour and the staff told the class that they were being punished because of what I had done. This turned a lot of the other boys against me and I got a hard time from them. I think some of the staff deliberately got the boys to target me. I know for a fact that one time I was getting bullied by another boy. Mr <sup>GNA</sup> [REDACTED] was standing nearby and would have seen me getting battered but he just turned and walked away. I can't remember the names of the bullies but they were fifteen or sixteen. I tried to stay out there way as much as I could. All that time I felt like a black sheep in a flock of white sheep. I wasn't aware of anyone else being singled out.
55. Within a few minutes of 'lights out' I would get pelted with boys shoes when I was lying in my bed. It got so bad at one point that I crawled under my bed to go to sleep. One of these boys was call [REDACTED] and another boy [REDACTED]. I became friendly with a boy called [REDACTED] who was a good fighter. I paired up with him so it was a bit easier for a while. Unfortunately when he left my

life collapsed again and the bullying started up again. There was a lot of bullying at Balgowan by the older boys on the younger boys. I was a quiet guy so I was an easy target for them.

56. I know that some of the boys would be taken grouse beating by <sup>GNF</sup> [REDACTED]. He would take ten or twelve of the older boys at a time in the summer. When they came back they told me that they had been given alcohol by him and were paid five pounds. They said the food they got was great and that they had enjoyed themselves. They never said anything else happened just that they got alcohol and money. I was never asked to go on these outings.

### **Reporting of abuse at Balgowan School**

57. After the time I ran away and was given a severe beating by Mr <sup>LIF</sup> [REDACTED] and Mr <sup>LSB</sup> [REDACTED] I was refused home leave for a few months. When I did eventually get home I showed my mum the marks on my back and told her what had happened. Even though it was two or three months since I was beaten the marks were still there. She freaked out when she saw my back. I don't know what my mum did after I told her but I was never beaten again at Balgowan even when I ran away and was returned by the police.
58. I never trusted anyone at Balgowan to tell them about the abuse. There was one person I might have told, Mr <sup>GNA</sup> [REDACTED], because I thought I trusted him but he then held me down while I was severely beaten. I couldn't trust anyone after that.

### **Leaving Balgowan School**

59. I was given my liberation date probably three months before I left Balgowan. I had been told that any bad behaviour may extend this date. I was at Balgowan for eighteen months. When it was time for me to leave I was taken down in the van to the train station, given a train ticket and that was it. It was the same routine as going

on weekend leave the only difference was I didn't go back. I would have been about eleven when I left.

### **Life back at home with mum**

60. I started back at Smithy Croft Secondary in Riddrie but within a week I started skipping school again. I think I felt school was a waste of time and I was better doing other things. I had social workers by this time, a male and female from Osborne Street social work department. Children's panels had also started and I was referred there and was taken to a panel in Albion Street by the social worker. I was there because of my truanting. At the panel I was sent to Thornly Park List D School and a female social worker took me by car. This would have been in 1973 or 1974 when I was fourteen or fifteen.

### **Thornly Park List D School, Paisley**

61. Thornly Park List D school was in Paisley and it was like a big mansion house and was in the countryside. It was run by the Church of Scotland. It was just for boys and there would have been about sixty to seventy boys. I might have been in a dorm but I am not sure. It was a very relaxed atmosphere and regime and boys were allowed to smoke. Mr <sup>GNB</sup> sometimes even brought his family in and it was all very family orientated.
62. <sup>SNR</sup> at Thornly Park was <sup>GNB</sup> and he was a Church of Scotland minister. He was very fair with me although I think his beliefs were a bit misguided. There was a matron and her name was <sup>GOH</sup>. There were other staff but I can't remember their names.



## **Routine at Thornly Park School**

### *Daily Routine*

63. I don't have a vivid recollection of Thornly Park for some reason and I don't remember a lot about the daily routine.
64. Every morning there was a meeting with the staff and representatives from each dorm and they all sat round a big table. Any boy with a grievance could highlight it to their representative and they would raise the subject at these meetings. The staff took notice of all the issues that were brought up and did something about it if they could. Other boys could sit in the public gallery and listen to proceedings. It was run like the houses of parliament. Someone even took minutes and they were written in a great big book.
65. We went by minibus on loads of trips to places like Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling. I got home leave over Christmas and got cards for my birthday. I was able to write home to my mum and she wrote back. The letters weren't opened or censored in any way.
66. I didn't get any visits from my mum because I told her not to come. I was in a good routine at Thornly Park and I didn't want her to get upset. I was also getting weekend leave. They would take me to the train station on the Friday and then on the Sunday they were there to pick me up.
67. I saw a social worker maybe once every three months. It was the same social worker who took me there that told me I was there because I was skipping school and I had to get an education because that was the law. She tried her best but my mind was already made up and I was going to abscond whenever I could.
68. There were umpteen people who came in and saw how Thornly Park was being run. I don't really know who these people were but they were amazed at how good it was.

They came in and asked us questions about the place when we were in a school class.

### *Discipline*

69. If you did something wrong Mr <sup>GNG</sup> would remove your privileges. You wouldn't be allowed on any of the outings, or you weren't allowed to go to the movie nights or you would lose smoking privileges. Running away would probably lose you two or three weekend's leave. You then had to earn them back.

### *Running away*

70. I didn't run away as such, I just didn't go back from weekend leave. It wasn't because I didn't like the place it was just through boredom. The longest I was on the run for was two or three weeks. I still didn't go back to my mum's because that was the first place the police would look for me and I didn't want her getting into trouble. I just stayed with my friends and got food from them. The police would routinely stop me and find out I was missing and take me back. Because of the number of times I ran away I was classed as an escapee.

### **Abuse at Thornly Park School**

71. There was only one incident at Thornly Park that wasn't dealt with properly. I took unwell and had something wrong with my leg. It was dragging and I had difficulty moving it. I went into the sick bay and I was there for six weeks before anyone called the doctor. Mr <sup>GNG</sup> and the matron <sup>GOH</sup> thought that I was kidding them on and that I was shirking work. We were supposed to be working in the fields picking berries and things like that. I wasn't allowed any home leave or any visits during this time. I was stuck in the sick bay although my friends from my dorm were allowed to visit me. The local GP eventually came out and he said I had a genuine illness. I can't remember what it was called but it affected the muscle on my heel so I couldn't put any weight on it. I was given medication for my nervous system.

72. There was never any physical punishment at Thornly Park. I didn't experience any abuse like that and I never saw any other boy being hit or abused in any way. I never saw any boys abusing or bullying any of the other boys. To give an indication of how good a regime it was, when I ran away I actually looked forward to going back. The way it was run was way before it's time compared to all the other places I was in. I don't have any real bad memories of Thornly Park apart from when I was denied treatment for my leg because they didn't believe me.

### **Leaving Thornly Park School**

73. I wasn't at Thornly Park when it was set alight and burned down. I had absconded and was on the run for a long time. I didn't go back to my mum's but she knew I had run away and was safe. After being on the run for a year my mum got a letter from the social work department asking her to take me to a children's panel. We went and we were told that Thornly Park couldn't take me back because it had burned down. I was told that I could stay with my mum and go to the local school, Riverside secondary school. I would have been about thirteen and a half, maybe fourteen.

### **Life back at home with mum**

74. I was back living with my mum for five or six months. I went to school but didn't stay. I would go in and register, go to the toilet then walk out the back door. The truant officers were coming to the house but I was dodging them in the street. I was eventually called back to the children's panel in Albion Street. I went to the panel and they sent me to the Kibble approved school. I went straight from the panel and didn't go home. I would have been close to fifteen by this time.

## **Kibble List D School, Paisley**

75. I don't know what organisation ran Kibble. I was in the old building at Kibble which had dorms with about eight or nine boys. There is now a new building and they are all single rooms. There were about forty boys in Kibble with a mixture of ages. The older boys were kept together. There were houses at the back of the school and these were the teacher's houses. <sup>SNR</sup> [REDACTED] was Mr <sup>GHK</sup> [REDACTED]. One teacher taught music and the only other teacher I remember was English and was cricket mad. He lived in the tenement flats directly facing the Kibble. We called him Nobby Stiles but not sure if that was his actual name. He was a good guy.
76. By the time I got to Kibble I was a hardened approved school boy so I knew the routine and how to stay out of trouble.

### **Routine at Kibble**

#### *Mornings and bedtime/ food*

77. We got up, maybe about 7:30 am, got washed then went for breakfast. After breakfast there was an assembly and we were told what we would be doing that day. We then either went to school or work. I can't remember anything about the food but I don't remember it being particularly bad or there being issues.

#### *Schooling*

78. There were classrooms and for some reason they were in one of the teacher's houses. Four or five of us would go into this teacher's house and we would listen to music. That was the extent of the education at Kibble. There were rumours that he smoked cannabis but I never saw him smoking it. There may have been classes for English and maths but I can't remember. There were also workshops for gardening, joinery, plumbing, building and other trades.

### *Religious instruction*

79. I regularly went to church but there were no issues between different faiths at Kibble.

### *Bed Wetting/Visitors*

80. Bed wetting wasn't an issue as far as I am aware. My mum never came to visit because I still didn't want her to. I wrote letters to her and she wrote back. I know my letters were censored and any letters from my mum were opened before I got them. I don't have any particular good memories from Kibble.

### *Discipline*

81. Any bad behaviour would result in weekend leave being curtailed or loss of other privileges. I was often caught because the police did spot checks of young boys. When they checked me out I would come back as missing. When I was taken back I was told what privileges I was losing by the head teacher.

### *Weekend leave / Running away*

82. I was there for a while before I was allowed weekend leave. My running away was the same as before. I didn't actually run away from Kibble I just didn't go back on the Sunday evening and I stayed with my pals.

### **Abuse at Kibble**

83. There was a boy whose last name was [REDACTED] but he was known as [REDACTED] and he was a bully. He was a tiny guy but had two henchmen who did his work for him. They were [REDACTED] and a boy whose last name was [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] targeted me and if I retaliated he set his boys on me. [REDACTED] was mouthy and if I spoke back to him he got them to batter me. They would punch and kick me all over my body. I tried to fight back but there was no point because there were two of them and they were

both about sixteen or seventeen. I don't know why [REDACTED] picked on me, although he did pick on other boys too but not as much as me.

84. I decided enough was enough one day when I was in the gardening party. I had a pitch fork and I was ready to whack [REDACTED] with it. The teacher saw what was going on and grabbed me. After that the staff read the riot act to me and told me about the potential consequences.

### **Reporting of abuse at Kibble**

85. The staff would have been aware of what was going on with [REDACTED]. I never reported anything but they would have seen my black eyes and the bruises. I know that a lot of bullying was reported to the staff but nothing was ever done about it. It was blatant. I know that some of the boys in Kibble were affected by it and turned to self-harming.

### **Leaving Kibble**

86. I was only in Kibble about three months. After the incident with the pitch fork I was kept well away from [REDACTED]. I realised the implications of what could have happened if I had hit him so I decided I had to get away from him and away from Kibble. I knew that if I didn't get away something would have happened that I might have regretted. I absconded and I was away from there for over a year.

### **Life on the run from Kibble**

87. After I ran away from Kibble I managed to get a job. I was working with two other boys and we had a van. We did all sorts of odd jobs and we were getting well paid and I was living in digs. I was managing to keep out of trouble and just got on with it.

I was aware that the police were still going to my mums and looking for me but I kept my head low. My mum knew where I was and that I was okay.

88. A year after I had left Kibble my mum got a letter from Albion Street social work department. In the letter they said that because I was now sixteen they were no longer responsible for me. They wanted me to go to another children's panel so they could do it formally and let me go. I was assured that was what was going to happen so I went along and that was what happened. I was barely there for ten minutes. I told them I had been working and hadn't been in any bother with the police. They said that under the circumstances and because I was now sixteen they couldn't intervene anymore and felt it was time to let me go.

### **Life after being in care**

89. I didn't really feel any differently after the children's panel as I knew it was just a formality. I carried on with what I was doing before. When I was eighteen I got my own garage and started up my own business. Because of my garage business I ended up being charged with a number of road traffic and construction and use offences.

### *Life in prison*

90. I was in Longriggend young offenders in 1977 on remand for three to five weeks. I was sentenced to Glenochil in [REDACTED] 1977 to serve sixty days. I went to Noranside borstal in [REDACTED] 1978. My sentence was one to two years borstal training. I would have been nineteen. My last sentence was sixty days in Barlinnie. Most of my sentences were by one judge, Irvine Smith. His daughter was killed in a stolen car so he came down really hard if you were appearing in court for road traffic offences.
91. Longriggend was brutal. My head was shaved when I got there, something to do with head-lice. I was later told that they shouldn't have done that. There were stabbings and slashings and inmates were beaten up. I was put in a wing and there was only

me and one other inmate who was in for gang warfare. He subsequently got sentenced to five years and he hung himself. I have no idea why I was segregated and put in this wing. The other wing where I had been was really rowdy and there was lots of fighting. Longriggend was hell. I didn't get any education or any help. There were classes but all it did for me was get me out the cell for a couple of hours.

92. My lasting memory from Glenochil was getting my tooth pulled out without any anaesthetic. The dentist had his knee on my chest and pulled it out with pliers. Both Glenochil and Barlinnie were minefields. There were riots and fights. You had to constantly watch what you were doing. Because of my history of absconding I was classed as an escapee. Wherever I went I had to be escorted by prison officers, whether that be to the toilet or when out on work parties. I was in with murderers, robbers and others who had committed serious crime yet I got most attention even though I was in for road traffic offences. It wasn't right.
93. All my sentences added up to nearly two and a half years. At the end of each sentence I was gate arrested for offences that were still waiting to be dealt with in the court because the charges were pending. My lawyer should have got them all dealt with at the one time but I was let down.

#### *Life after 1982*

94. In 1982 I met my wife to be and I was never in bother with the police again. We married in 1989. I went to college and did a business management course and I did well building up my business. I had various contracts with several big companies and I was doing really well. Unfortunately in 1995 I lost everything as a result of an accident. My health was affected, I couldn't work and I lost my business. I was never tempted to resort to crime even though it was offered to me. My wife died four years ago.



## Impact

95. Balgowan was the catalyst for what was going to happen to me for the rest of my life and how everything followed on from that. As a result, since the incident where I was leathered by Mr <sup>LIF</sup> [REDACTED] and Mr <sup>LSB</sup> [REDACTED] after running away, I have learned never to trust anybody, and I mean anybody. This put the shutters up for me.
96. Of all the places, including young offenders' institution, borstal and prison, Balgowan was without doubt the worst place I have ever been. It may have been that I was institutionalised by the time I got to prison because I knew everyone, they all knew me and I knew the routine, what to expect and how to behave. It was all ingrained into me.
97. I have never been able to work for somebody because I couldn't handle being told what to do or someone standing over me watching what I was doing. This stems back to my early days at Balgowan. I have always worked on my own and been my own boss. Even if nowadays someone looks over my shoulder when I am doing a job it makes me very uncomfortable.
98. Ever since the time I had issues with my legs in Thornly Park I still have issues to this day. I was sent to the neuroscience department at the Queen Margaret hospital and they have told me that I have neurological damage. It gives me pain in my legs and feet. It is difficult to put weight on my feet and at times my feet get really hot.
99. When I was about 21 I saw [REDACTED], who had bullied me at Kibble, in a pub in Glasgow. I went over to him and I told him I wasn't a wee boy anymore and I asked him if he wanted to beat me up now. His face went white. My mum was there and I told her that this was one of the boys that bullied me at Kibble. He tried to make excuses that they were all just young boys. I wanted to beat him up but I decided he wasn't worth it.

100. I always wanted to work. I was a grafter. If someone had identified this and offered me an apprenticeship or other training, rather than just force me to get educated I would have turned out a different person.
101. My wife and every other partner I ever had have told me that I have a serious trust issue and I know they are right. Ever since I was beaten at Balgowan and I was held down by Mr <sup>GNA</sup> [REDACTED], who I liked and trusted, I have not been able to trust anyone. Everything and everyone I come across I have to analyse and I am always very sceptical. I have to know someone for a very long time before I can even remotely trust them or let the brick wall down that I have built up. I know I have a chip on my shoulder and I hate it and would like to get rid of that but can't. I push people away who try to get close to me. I am frightened to let my defences down because I am afraid I will get hurt.
102. It took me years to disassociate myself from all the people who I came across in my time in care and prison. As soon as I met my wife I pulled myself away from them all. It was like I was following the white line in the middle of the road. I didn't want to veer to the left or to the right. I wanted to go straight ahead and break away from everyone else that might try and distract me. I have been approached many times by old acquaintances and I have had to tell them I am not interested in getting involved in any criminality. This has made me even more isolated and lonely but that was the way I wanted to go. I don't go out my way to mingle with them.
103. My own personal health is not great. I have arthritis, fibromyalgia and have suffered a heart attack. I have had stents fitted to my heart. I was only diagnosed within the last few months with fibromyalgia and have been told by Professor John Reid that my fibromyalgia could stem from childhood trauma. I have had the symptoms of fibromyalgia for a long time.



**Hopes for the Inquiry**

109. I hope that by me coming forward it will encourage others to do the same, to have their say and to have their voices heard. Children must be able to trust someone enough to confide in them. That trust must never be broken or that child will never trust again.

**Other information**

- 110. I have never tried to get any compensation for the abuse I suffered in care.
- 111. About five or six years ago I approached Albion Street social work department because they were looking for people with appropriate experience to sit on the children's panel. I had been down that road on a personal level and I thought I could give some input and make a difference to children. I went for interview and they agreed that I had something to offer and that I would be ideal for the post. Unfortunately my wife became unwell at the time and I had to withdraw, I still have the paperwork and I may consider it in the future. I was also considering becoming a volunteer at an old folk's hospice but the pandemic came along so that stopped.
- 112. 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.

GMY  


Signed.....

Dated..... 7/4/22 .....