

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GCA
[REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is GCA [REDACTED]. I am known as GCA [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 1950. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was brought up in the tenements in Glasgow by my mum [REDACTED] and my dad [REDACTED].
3. Our family home was [REDACTED] in Glasgow. It was a single end and there was my granny, my mum and dad, me, my older brother and sister and I think one other brother. It was just pure poverty.
4. The eldest was my sister [REDACTED], then there was my older brother [REDACTED] then me. Then my younger brothers [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] then my younger sisters [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are dead now. [REDACTED] died aged fourteen months from meningitis or blood poisoning.
5. It was a poverty background, my dad was a typical labourer from those days and I remember it was just about surviving. It wasn't the cleanest of family homes. My mum and dad both liked a good drink but there was love in the house. That was just the way we were brought up.
6. My first vivid memory of growing up was going to, I think it was Woodlea, to see my gran. That was my first time in the city centre. I went up with my mum. I don't even

know how often we got washed. I see now it was just normal for families, being brought up like that.

7. I look back now with a bit of resentment and wonder how they could bring us up like that. My dad was a devout catholic and we were brought up in the catholic faith, which I still do the now.
8. We then moved to a room and kitchen [REDACTED] in Glasgow. It was a top flat. I stayed there until I was about twelve. Then things changed a wee bit and I started getting into a bit of bother. I was also an altar boy at the same time so that was a wee bit different.
9. We had practically the freedom to do what we want. I think that was a lot to do with my mum and dad. Let's say their parental skills weren't what I am used to now. We were still quite dirty and things like that.
10. At that time there were another three or four children and I remember my mum lost one. [REDACTED], who was only fourteen months.
11. I went from St. Mungo's primary to St. Roch's junior secondary then to St. Mary's. I was intelligent but just lazy, I never really listened. I had a good attendance because my brothers went, so I went as well.
12. Then we moved to Blackhill and we had a bigger house, it was like a mansion compared to what we'd had. I was never out of control but I got in more bother there. I did wee petty things, breaking into a shop or something like that. Nothing really bad.
13. The scheme was known as one of the worst in Scotland. It was a tough community but we had good neighbours and you stuck together.
14. There was a gang culture, we committed minor crime and carried weapons.

15. My dad worked hard and drank hard and when I was about thirteen or fourteen my mum ended up in Stobhill Hospital. I believe that was for alcoholism. She never drank again after that and I think it was about that time that I started to drink.
16. My main recollections from my childhood are the poverty. Sometimes we got laughed at for what we were wearing but it was all my parents could afford and they did get into a lot of debt for us.
17. I did resent that, the fact we were so poor. Everyone else was probably the same at that time but I didn't think about that. I used to think how could they bring us up like that. Even the now it comes back to me and I feel guilty even thinking that.

Langbank, Renfrew

General

18. I remember the social work but they were called the "cruelty people". I think an auntie through the wall maybe reported us but we were no different from any other family in the area.
19. This man came and we ended up going to Langbank, a Catholic residential school. It was just at Port Glasgow off the M8. I was about ten or twelve then.

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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23. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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28. In Blackhill things were going downhill with minor crime, shop windows and things like that. I went about with "The Boys from Blackhill" and we would carry weapons. Like a knife or that, nothing like nowadays. I detest all that now.

29. In 1964 when I was fourteen the police charged me with theft of scrap metal. I was set up because I was from Blackhill. I'll never forget the two policemen, they made me load some scrap metal into the back of their Landrover then done me with it.

30. I was taken to Larchgrove remand centre. I was in and out of there a few times. Then I was sent to an approved school for two years. That was St. Mary's list D school in Bishopbriggs.

Larchgrove Assessment Centre, Glasgow*General*

31. I was in and out of Larchgrove a few times but I was never in for more than about two weeks. I'm not sure when the first time was. Once was for the scrap metal and I was sent another time for breaking into a shop. I appeared at juvenile court and was sent there.
32. You had to show you weren't a softy and I would fight a lot with other boys.
33. I don't remember much about the routine. We didn't do much. We did have room inspections and your stuff would be cowped and thrown about if it wasn't tidy enough.
34. It could be very disciplined at times, then at other times you were allowed to get away with things. You weren't allowed to smoke and if you got caught that was a bad thing.
35. I don't remember any official discipline, there probably was but I'd be telling lies if I said there was. We didn't do any school work or activities, I don't remember anything like that.
36. You may be only in a couple of nights before going in front of a magistrate or JP (Justice of the Peace).
37. My probation officer was Mr Wilson and he was a fantastic guy to me. He was my probation officer between the ages of twelve and fourteen. I would see him about once a wee. In those days you didn't say anything to anyone, I didn't say anything to him. I saw that as a waste of time.

Abuse at Larchgrove

38. There was physical abuse that happened to me at Larchgrove. We slept in dormitory type rooms with about four or five boys in each one.
39. I was often woken up by screaming and you could sometimes hear the staff members coming in at night to get the boys. It would usually be if the boys had done something during the day.
40. We were hit all over the body, anywhere, anywhere at all. If you were ever hit you knew to say you had fallen. You never spoke about it. It was a waste of time making complaints.
41. If they done it to you, fine, it was like that's what you deserved and that was the way you looked at it. No matter what, everybody was seen as guilty in there.
42. I never saw anything sexual at Larchgrove. There was talk of it amongst the boys, and I heard about it but you didn't know if that was true. It could have been gossip.
43. They had a cell called "The Peter", where they took them. They weren't away in there for that long but it was all locked up and things like that.
44. I wasn't abused in any way at Larchgrove and I don't have a great recollection, as I say I wasn't there for long.

St. Mary's List D, Bishopbriggs

Routine

First day

45. I remember when I left Larchgrove I was given my old clothes to wear. It was the same clothes I was lifted in when I went to Larchgrove. They just gave them back to me as I was moving on.
46. It wasn't the best of gear. I had short trousers, a shirt and a pair of shoes, none of it was clean. I was fourteen years old.
47. I was treated like I had scabies. I was stripped naked by two staff members and all my clothes were thrown in a bin. It was humiliating, very very humiliating.
48. We were put into different categories and told what you could do and where you went. We were issued with the St. Mary's uniform. Different dorms had different coloured jerseys.
49. When you went out, everybody in Bishopbriggs knew where you came from.

Mornings and bedtime (washing and bathing)

50. We got up about 7am, washed, had breakfast and went to school on the premises. We had lunch, more school, then changed to our play clothes for so long.
51. I remember that when we had showers you always felt like you were getting looked at. There was members of staff who were there to stop you carrying on. I felt they were perverts and were looking at you to see what you looked like. I may be wrong but that's what I thought.
52. I think there was about twenty or thirty in each dorm at St. Mary's. All the boys were aged between thirteen and sixteen. There was also St. Ninians in Stirling for boys aged thirteen and under and St. John's which was next to Larchgrove on the Edinburgh Road for the older boys.

53. The place you didn't feel safe was the dormitory. One thing was boys from other dorms coming in and bullying you. Then there was staff coming in as well, which was a different matter.
54. I'll be perfectly honest and say I never witnessed anything sexual but I did hear things. The staff would pick on boys, take some away out the dorm and get them to do things. You would hear them saying "Come on [REDACTED] you're coming with me son, how are you?" things like that, being very nice and that.
55. Then the boys would come back and you would hear them crying and they wouldn't say anything. They were being abused.
56. I think the older boys and the staff targeted boys who were from a different background, boys who were softer or from a better off background and didn't know how to look after themselves.
57. Most of the time I just wanted to pull the cover over my head. You couldn't tell anyone because you would still be kept there.
58. We sometimes had showers at night, then it was into our jammies and bed. We sometimes got to read in bed.

Food

59. The food wasn't too bad at St. Mary', it was alright. Probably better than I would have had at home.

School/religious instruction/work

60. I think [REDACTED] SNR was Brother [REDACTED] GTQ I could be wrong but whoever [REDACTED] SNR was, I hated him with a vengeance. There were four or five other teachers and then a few civilians who were also teachers.

61. I was once kept in for the weekend for carrying on. That was Mr KCC, he was a layman, not a brother. I called him an "old bastard" for that and he gave me hell from that moment on.
62. That man kicked me, skelped me and slapped me all over. Even in front of people he would do that. He battered hell out us.
63. I was fourteen and I was smoking and would get tobacco from my dad. He would ask me what was wrong. I couldn't tell him anything as I would only have got worse.
64. I remember Mr Kennedy who was a good teacher. He was not an abuser. I went to Dundee with him once, to pick up a new boy and bring him back. That was no problem.
65. Others I remember from the school are Brother Finton, who was retired, and Brother Hendry, I can't remember any more just now. We had a song about them, if I remember the words their names will come back. I think they were okay.
66. The priests that came in for mass and confession were okay. I've never had a problem with a Catholic priest but the brothers are a completely different kettle of fish.

Holidays/leisure

67. I liked my football and I remember Brother Thomas. He was fantastic and loved football too. He was good and looked after us. No one showed any violence towards us when he was about. We played football matches in the local leagues and got buses to the matches.
68. It was more lax at weekends at St. Mary's and I'd get my single bed. I'd no have to share a bed with my brothers. Mum and dad would sometimes visit. I'd get tobacco from my dad.

Birthdays and Christmas /personal possessions

69. We had a Christmas dinner and a selection box and things like that. Your mum or dad would bring you something as well.
70. We would also be allowed home at weekends if you didn't do anything silly and that sometimes happened at Christmas too. I done some silly things so I would be kept in, but it didn't bother me that much.

Visits/inspections/siblings

71. I had my probation officer, Mr Wilson, but not a social worker or any social care visits or anything like that. I don't remember many visits at St. Mary's. Maybe Mr Wilson visited but I would never have told him anything about what was happening.
72. My dad did come up quite a lot, but it was probably so he could have a drink at Quin's. He would give me my tobacco if I wasn't getting home.
73. I don't remember any inspections of the residence or anything like that.

Healthcare

74. Now and again in the gym they treated our heads for nits and things like that.
75. There was doctors and nurses and you would get to see them if you hurt yourself. We got medicals from doctors at all the places I stayed.

Abuse at St. Mary's

76. Mr ^{KCQ} was the main perpetrator, I told you he kicked and skelped me all the time. I hated that man, I really hated him.

77. I also have this thing about [SNR], who might have been Brother [GTQ]. As far I was concerned he was the evil, evil man. A dirty evil man.
78. He was a paedophile but I was never sexually abused by him. Nobody would be able to do that to me unless they tied me down.
79. Boys told me [SNR] had touched them inappropriately and that he would get them to sit on his knee.
80. I once ran away for about four days. I went in front of [SNR] to get the strap. He told me not to worry about it, as after he'd done it he would sooth it all for me. I told him he wasn't doing that to me and he said he could do what he wanted.
81. I told him "no way you're touching me". This was after what other boys had told me. I ran out of there.
82. I got caught and he took me in and said I was getting twelve lashes with his belt. He gave me three then and said he would give me the rest whenever he wanted to do it. I wouldn't know when.
83. Sometimes he would strap your bare backside and sometimes with your clothes on. I wasn't letting him strap my bare backside though.
84. He told other staff to give me a hard time and I was petrified of someone giving me the belt after that, because he had told them to. I only felt safe when I was around Brother Thomas at the football. He never did anything inappropriate.
85. As far I was concerned the staff were working under the command of [SNR] [SNR] and were being told to take it out on me.
86. When you went into [SNR] room I will always remember the picture on the wall behind him. It was a flamenco dancer and I could never understand why it

wasn't of Jesus or Mary or something religious. It's stuck in my head and if I ever see a flamenco dance I can be up all night thinking about it.

87. I was on holiday in Majorca and the Spanish dancers came on and I had to say to my wife "I'm away", I couldn't sit through it.
88. There was that picture and a big jar of Vaseline on the table underneath it. I can't have that in the house.
89. He would sit with it and say it would help you, after he'd strapped you. He would say that to me but I told him he wasn't coming near me with it. He would strap me on my wrists and hands as he knew he wouldn't get to strap me anywhere else.
90. He would belt me for anything, misdemeanours, swearing, anything like that.
91. He would say it could be a lot easier if I accepted his punishment and let him strap my bare backside, but I said no. I knew what he was meaning, I was fourteen.
92. When I was strapped like that I would always wet the bed so I would never get home that weekend.
93. Two of the staff that used to come into the dorms and pick on the boys were LYT and KDB. They were farm workers and worked nightshifts at the school as well. I'm not sure about LYT, I wouldn't make any allegations about him, he may have been good to the boys.
94. Nearer the end I just didn't trust any of them except for Brother Thomas who was good.
95. They picked on kids that couldn't look after themselves. Kids that had not had such a tough upbringing. That was staff and the older boys that did that. Definitely KDB on a nightshift.

96. Bedwetting happened and you would get punished with the strap. You would get called a dirty wee whatever. I honestly don't think I was wetting the bed at that time. That came later for me.

Leaving St. Mary's

97. After I'd been at St. Mary's over a year, they got me a job in a warehouse in Glasgow. I would have been fifteen or sixteen. That was when I got my first suit. St. Mary's arranged all that.
98. I was at St. Mary's less than two years then I was back home.
99. Things were beginning to get better at home. Me and my siblings were working and we had money.
100. Then I started drinking. Which, even then, was like self-destruction for me. I was on the cheap wine and cider. I see that now but not then.
101. I'd say St. Mary's drove me to drink. I had my own bed in the house and I'd started wetting the bed then. That was after St. Mary's.
102. I was getting drunk and getting into bother with the gangs and I ended up in Polmont.

Polmont Young Offenders Institute

General

103. I was in Polmont for only about two weeks for social reports after an attempted car theft. I was about seventeen. I was put on a constant watch because of being an escape risk at St. Mary's. That was changed by the head at Polmont.

104. I used to get visits there, from my girlfriend at the time and my family and my brother-in-law, they used to come up and see me.

Abuse at Polmont

105. It was very bad in Polmont and the wardens gave me a hard time. I got a do-in from two or three of them for giving them my full name, then saying my father's name was the same as mine. They thought I was being the fly man and really set about me.
106. I was punched and kicked all over and I remember my stomach it was bad, they hit me with everything. Three big men and just me. I don't know any of their names.
107. I remember one time a visitor at Polmont brought me some cigarettes. I saved some cigarettes from the visit and took them back to my cell and put them in my tin. I must have been spotted. The wardens belted me and punched me for that. I had dumped the fags so they didn't find a thing. They were just proving a point about who the bosses were.
108. I got the beatings from staff in there just for my attitude. That happened all the time in there. I would have been in adolescence but I was punished like I was an adult.
109. I was never really evil it was all just high jinks. I was very lucky as I was one of the few that got a grip of myself. When I was in there I decided I didn't want that life.
110. After Polmont I got work and eventually joined the army and I was never in bother again after that.

Reporting of abuse while in care

111. There was no reporting of the abuse at any places I stayed. You were too scared to say a word. You didn't know what might happen to you.

Life after being in care

112. I worked in the pits, the hospitals and I was a bus conductor after I came out of care. I couldn't get in the army at first because of my record and my height.
113. When I was nineteen though, they accepted me. I was in the army for twelve years and I reached sergeant. I was very proud of myself for that and my family were very proud of me.
114. I met [REDACTED], my wife, when I was in the military, her sister was married to my younger brother and that's how we met. We've been together ever since. We get on well and I can talk to her but only about certain things. We do have our ups and downs but she's been really good for me. She's really my whole point of living.

Impact*Drinking*

115. I was drinking from the age of about thirteen.
116. It all came to a head in the army when I joined the [REDACTED]. I was wetting the bed, having black-outs and fighting.
117. There was a drinking culture in the army and it was in the army that I was diagnosed as a chronic alcoholic. For my first four years I was in the Infantry and I was going nowhere. I'd joined up to be a driver and the closest I got was the back seat.
118. There was bullying in the army but it was accepted, if you understand what I'm meaning. It was to get you to be reliable and good and disciplined.

119. I was posted to Germany and if I wasn't working I'd just be getting blootered. I loved the army but the drink had taken hold. That's why I left.
120. I was actually a [REDACTED] barman at one point but I managed to abstain during that period. Then I was posted to Northern Ireland and I was back on it. The bed would be soaking again.
121. I was posted to Northern Ireland when I was in the infantry and got involved in a lot of fighting there, I don't know if I was involved in any killing but maybe. I was blown up out there. I had a lot of experience in conflict with civilians.
122. If I had stayed in the infantry I wouldn't have went anywhere. When I transferred to the [REDACTED] I got dried out and got promoted from a driver to a sergeant in three years. I was good at my job, until I went back on the drink.
123. I was eventually put in, what we called the "Basket Weaving Factory", to get me off the drink. I did eventually stop drinking at that time. I was then promoted to sergeant and worked in recruitment. Then I was in the Sergeants Mess and back on the drink.
124. I was a member of Alcoholics Anonymous for about seven and a half years, but not anymore. I've not taken a drink for thirty four years.

Health

125. I stopped my work, as a lorry driver, about ten years ago and handed in my driving licence. I was diagnosed with angina and depression, but I didn't have angina. I'd been taking panic attacks and having nightmares and flashbacks.
126. My flashbacks were mixed, in one I was in my jocks uniform patrolling the streets at Kenmure House outside St. Mary's. It was like I was patrolling the streets looking for the brothers or something. Next thing I was in Londonderry or Belfast and I'd see priests. It was like all these things were joined in together.

127. So in about 2007 I got in touch with Combat Stress and a Scottish Colonel came out to see me. He told me I needed help and I ended up going to see a psychiatrist.
128. I'd been off the drink about twenty years and the psychiatrist was amazed I wasn't back on it. He said I was suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
129. I didn't know what that was. I spoke to the psychiatrist about my childhood but I didn't go into any depth. I knew there was something and that it might be linked to St. Mary's and my time in care. I didn't want to say anything.
130. I didn't like Combat Stress for my PTSD. I was also seen by a Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) but that didn't work either. None of that was really any use.
131. I get a lot of medication from my doctor for psychiatric problems. I get anti-depressants, sleeping tablets and diazepam. I've been on the sleeping tablets since I left the forces. I was drinking before that so that would help me get to sleep.
132. I also take morphine every day for my chronic pancreatitis from my alcohol. My pancreas is damaged but not enough for an operation. If I suffer from it, I suffer from it and it can be very painful if I miss my morphine.
133. I try to manage my own pain and if not we'll get the doctor out. He'll tell me it's a serious illness and I need to go to the hospital but I'll not go near a hospital. I'm always terrified I'll go in and not come out again.

Self-Harm

134. When I was in the military I took a handful of [REDACTED] after splitting with a girl. It was more a cry for help than anything else. I was taken into hospital and they gave me something to make me sick. Later I saw my doctor and he just gave me more [REDACTED].

General

135. I had no self-confidence and I kept having nightmares and flashbacks from St. Mary's mostly.
136. I hate going into a room with a heavy door and it's locked and I've got a pure pure fear of ever going in to a cell again. That's a real fear for me. That's from the cells at Polmont. That's what that place done to me.
137. While I was in the forces and I wasn't a perfect soldier by far, but I never got into bother as I never wanted to end up in a cell.
138. I think there was a cell or a room at St. Mary's for kids that went mad and wrecked everything. A special room, that was padded.
139. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
140. My wife says I'm too quick to make friends. That's just my nature though. She'll stand back a bit and I will talk away to people, anybody really. If I can help someone, I'd rather do that than be nasty.
141. I can be a nasty wee person though. Not now as I'm on a high talking about all this and it's making me feel better. But, I could be on the train looking at my paper and somebody could say something and I'd ignore them or be nippy.
142. I don't like that other GCA. I like to be easy going, happy and helpful. I do take moods but I'm working hard at that. I'm aware what I'm like when I'm in one of my moods and I don't like it.
143. I hate being late and other people being late.

144. I've never really shared anything about my abuse in care. Not to the extent that I am now.
145. I have shared little bits about my upbringing as a child and about the military but never a lot about St. Mary's and my trouble. Even with [REDACTED], my wife, I've shared very little. I've shared some of it with my son. He's not my biological son, but we've brought him up since he was four.
146. I have been, and I was, a bit strict with him. I didn't want him to have the same poverty and deprivation that I had. I made sure he was never wanting.
147. I can never visit my brother as he stays near St. Mary's and I couldn't go near Kenmure Avenue. I just couldn't handle that.

Records

148. I have no records from my time in care and I've never considered applying for any. I'm not bothered they're of no interest to me and might just bring back bad memories.

Reporting to the police

149. I was contacted by Ross Harper solicitors about ten years ago. They phoned me up and asked about St. Mary's. I have no idea how they knew I had been there, it might have been my sister that told them, but I don't know.
150. They told me to inform the police about my abuse. I filled in paperwork for them. A sergeant from the CID in Irvine came and spoke to me. Ross Harper seemed to deal with it all and they told me it was time-barred so nothing could be done.

151. I'm sure Ross Harper wouldn't have been in it for nothing but I want to make it clear this time that I'm not here for any financial gain or anything like that.

Counselling and support

152. I've mentioned Combat Stress and the CPN counselling but that wasn't for child abuse. That was for my PTSD and anger management. I didn't like them.
153. Future Pathways has been the best counselling I've had. That's been since I contacted the Inquiry. I'm seeing a trauma counsellor and I'm seeing if I can get help with the sleeping tablets.
154. I've now started doing something about it and it's making me feel good. Talking now with yourselves is giving me a great lift and I feel it's helping me now I've started.

Lessons to be learned

155. I think there should be a lot more inspections at places of care.
156. Actually listening to the children as well, even eight and nine year olds are able to tell you things.
157. It's the same with vulnerable adults, I've worked with them and I know you can get to know them and understand what they need.
158. If I look at all the experiences I went through and look at it sensibly it was for my own good. The fact is I was a very small time crook who didn't really want to do all that stuff. I suffered that way but then I joined the army and it changed me completely. It changed my outlook on life completely.

159. The military and the Red Cross, who I did a lot of voluntary work for, were both great for me. They were two of the best things I've done in my life. I have no real bad recollections from these times. I had a hell of a lot of bad times but I only remember the good.

160. I just wish something had been done years and years ago about the vile people that were at St. Mary's. If it is his name, Brother ^{GTQ} [REDACTED], I believe that if there is a God he'll get his justice.

161. However, with a place like St. Mary's all I can remember is the bad things.

162. 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.

GCA [REDACTED]

Signed.....

Dated..... 31/10/17