

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

MPC

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is MPC. My date of birth is 1940. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. Before going into care I didn't even know that I had a mother until just before I left to go to Australia when I was fifteen. Through my records I have found out that I was born in Southport, England. My father died when he was 47. His name was . I don't remember anything about him or what he looked like. It might have been that he was working in the Southport area and that is why we stayed there. After my father died the family moved to Scotland where I was brought up. MPC was the name I was known by when I was in care.
3. I have a brother, and a sister, BKX. BKX is three years younger than me. I didn't know I had a sister until she came into the children's home at North Berwick. I never knew about my brother until I traced my family. is younger than me but older than BKX.
4. Apparently my mother had a lot of debt. This was the reason why I was put into care. I found out when I was an adult that my mother was supposed to come and take me out of Barnardo's once she had sorted things out. However she never did.

5. When I was four I was put into a baby home at Comlongon Castle in Dumfries. I don't have many memories of being there. I wasn't there very long. I just know I was there before going to Glasclune at North Berwick. It must have been before I was five as you went to Glasclune prior to going to primary school.
6. My earliest memories of childhood are being in the Barnardo's home at Glasclune in North Berwick.

#### **Barnardo's, Glasclune House, North Berwick**

7. I don't remember how I ended up at Glasclune in North Berwick. I think I was still about five years old when I arrived. I stayed at the home until I was fifteen. It was boys and girls at the home. They were all different ages. I don't know how many children were there in total.
8. BDO/SPO are the only people that I remember running the home when I was there. There might have been others but I don't know who they were. They had children who I was friendly with. There were other staff members who worked there and I called them aunties.
9. The home was very strict but I didn't mind. I thought that this was okay.

#### **Routine at Glasclune**

10. When I was at Glasclune I never knew what a normal family life was. I just thought the home was what my life was. I didn't think of anything else. I would say in general I was treated well there.
11. One day I was told my sister was coming to stay with me. At that time I didn't even know what a sister was. I'm not sure what age I was when she came. I put sweets on her pillow for her coming.

### *Dormitories*

12. At first I remember that I slept in a big dormitory. It was all girls the same age as me. As you got older you went to a different floor. It was smaller bedrooms there that slept one or two people.

### *Mornings and bedtime*

13. Every morning you had to strip your bed and fold it at the bottom. You would then do your prayers before breakfast. It was Church of England but I think that there were some Catholic children there as well.

### *Mealtimes/Food*

14. I couldn't complain about the food. We were fed quite well. You were given a cooked breakfast. I can't remember what we had for tea.
15. I used to be sick and faint when I ate some of the food. When I was in Australia I was diagnosed as coeliac disease. This was never diagnosed at the home.

### *Clothing/uniform*

16. I was provided with a school uniform. I changed into different clothes after school. These were called our play clothes. After school we had to polish our school shoes for the next day. We also had a Sunday best outfit for going to church.
17. There was a cupboard in the home that you would pick a pair of shoes from. When you were older you were taken to the shops and they bought you a pair.

### *Leisure time*

18. I had a friend at school called [REDACTED] Sometimes I would go to her house after school. I still keep in touch with her now and have been to visit her in Scotland.
19. I played tennis and went swimming in my spare time. I was also in the girl guides and the Sea Rangers.
20. One night after the Sea Rangers a boy walked me home. As we got to the gates at Glasclune he gave me a kiss. Mr [REDACTED] BDO went past in his car at the same time this happened. He told me later that I could get pregnant if I kissed a boy. After this if any boy tried to kiss me I would freak out. That was my sex education. No one explained to me what it was like growing up as a girl and the changes that happened to you.

#### *Trips and holidays*

21. During the holidays people would come to the home and take you to stay with them. [REDACTED] BKX and I went with Mr and Mrs McDowall. They lived on a farm. Although they weren't any relation to us we would call them auntie and uncle. Mrs McDowall was a lovely woman. I remember going there once or twice a year.
22. The home would take us on trips. We went to the pantomime in Edinburgh. We also went to the tattoo at Edinburgh Castle.

#### *School*

23. I went to primary school in North Berwick. I enjoyed it there. At the school we were called 'banana skins'. I think that this was because the other kids knew we were from Dr Barnardo's. At school we were provided with a cooked lunch.
24. When I was older I moved to North Berwick High School. I did highland dancing at high school.

#### *Birthdays, Christmas and other occasions*

25. My birthday was never celebrated at the home. There was never any affection, no cuddles or anything like that.
26. At Christmas we had a Christmas dinner and were given little presents. They would ask you what you wanted. There was also a service at the church.
27. The last Christmas I was at Glasclune I was given a pair of fur gloves as a present. I loved them. When I went to Australia I wasn't allowed to take the gloves with me. This really upset me.
28. We were normally given toys for Christmas presents. All the time I was at Glasclune I never had a doll.
29. When it was Guy Fawkes night the home would put on a fireworks display.

#### *Family contact*

30. There were never any visits from any of my family members whilst I was in the home. A lot of the other children would have visits from their families. At that time I never knew I had any family that could visit me.
31. One of the girls was from Edinburgh. Her father would come and visit her. Sometimes he would take her to Edinburgh for a few days. Once when this happened she asked me to go with her. When I arrived in Edinburgh I was frightened. I didn't like it. It was just because I wasn't used to it. I didn't even stay one night. The girl's father had to drive me all the way back to North Berwick.

#### *Discipline*

32. If you did something wrong you would have to line up outside of Mr BDO office. I know from speaking to some of the other girls that Mr BDO would smack their bottoms as a punishment. This never happened to me. I never actually saw this happening it was just what I was told.



### **Abuse at Glasclune**

33. Mr <sup>BDO</sup> would sometimes put his arm around you and place his hand near your breast. I also saw him doing this with some of the other older girls. It wasn't a normal cuddle. Nobody ever spoke about this.
34. On one occasion when we were at Mr and Mrs McDowalls her [REDACTED] who we called <sup>BKU</sup> took myself and <sup>BKX</sup> for a walk. He sat us on a wall then kissed me on the lips, putting his tongue in my mouth. He then put his hand right up my skirt. I was about twelve years old when this happened. I don't know if he did the same to <sup>BKX</sup>. I started to get upset and asked him to take us back home. I never told anyone about this. I wouldn't have known who to speak to about it even if I did want to say.
35. <sup>BKU</sup> full name was <sup>BKU</sup> I don't know how old he was at this time. It is hard to judge someone's age when you are so young.

### **Leaving Glasclune**

36. When I was fifteen I went to Australia. I only found out that I would be going the day before we left. One of the staff at the home told me something about kangaroos and Aborigines with boomerangs. It was quite a strange experience to be told all of this.
37. I found out later that Barnardo's had to ask my mother's permission for me to go to Australia.

### *Medical checks*

38. I did not receive a medical before I left Glasclune to go to Australia.

### *Preparation*

39. I don't think it was normal for someone my age to be sent to Australia. My sister BKX was going so I think it was decided that we would go together. I was happy where I was I didn't really want to go. I never realised it was going to be such a long way to Australia.
40. There was two or three of us from Glasclune that were going to Australia. We travelled by train from North Berwick to another home at Barkingside in England. I think that there was a group leader with us but I didn't know their name.
41. At Barkingside we were taken to a shop where they bought clothes for us. I had a little suitcase for my clothes. I think we were there a couple of days. The comedian Tommy Trinder was at Barkingside when we left to go to the docks. We had our photograph taken with him.
42. I'm not sure what date we set off for Australia from Tilbury docks. The ship was called the Orontes. It still felt like we were going on an adventure. I had my photograph taken with the other children when we were going on to the ship.
43. Looking back now I really didn't want to go to Australia but I had to. I didn't think I had anyone else apart from BKX I thought that my mother was dead.

### *Transportation*

44. I shared a cabin on the ship with some other girls. I don't remember if BKX was in the cabin with me. I think there were about twelve of us on the ship from different Barnardo homes.
45. There were also two adults, a man and a woman, who looked after us on the ship. I think the woman was called Mrs Bickmore. I think the man's name was Mr Brady.

46. The weather was pretty rough on parts of the journey. I was sea sick a lot. when I was sick I was always well looked after.
47. The journey lasted about six weeks in total. I think we stopped off in Greece. There might have been other places but I don't remember.

#### *Arrival in Australia*

48. We arrived in Fremantle, Western Australia and disembarked for a little while. I think that some of the other children stayed there. The ones that weren't staying on in Fremantle had lunch then went back on to the ship. After this we sailed on to Sydney. I think we arrived at Sydney on [REDACTED] 1956. In Sydney we were picked up and taken by bus to a place called Burwood Girls Home. I still had no idea what was happening.

#### **Barnardo's Home, Burwood, New South Wales, Australia**

49. Burwood was a big home on three storeys. There were dormitories just the same as Glasclune. I was only at Burwood for two or three days. One of the other girls who had been on the ship with me had a job to go to. She was going to work for [REDACTED] [REDACTED] MSD [REDACTED] They also wanted someone to work for her son [REDACTED] MSC [REDACTED]. I was told that I was to go there work for this family. [REDACTED] BKX [REDACTED] stayed at the home. I wouldn't see her for a long time after I left.

#### *Work placements*

50. The family I went to work for stayed at Edgecliffe. This was on the other side of Sydney from where the home was. I lived in with the family. I had to look after their little girl and do work in the house. I was paid £4 a week. In my Barnardo's reports it always said that I was good working with children. I was treated okay by this family.



51. There was one occasion when another girl and I were on our way to church. We met some boys who asked us to go on a boat with them. The motor on the boat broke down and I was late home. When the family found out where I had been I was told that they were disgusted with me. They asked a doctor to come and examine me. It was an awful experience.
52. I still kept in touch with Barnardo's in Sydney. At that time I looked on Barnardo's as my life and family. They told me that I should go and visit <sup>BKX</sup> who was still at Burwood. It was a long train journey from where I was staying so I didn't go.
53. It was lonely where I was working as I didn't have anyone to talk to so I joined a church group. Barnardo's were quite good at keeping in touch with whoever I was working with. I probably didn't keep in touch with them as often as I should have.
54. I was with the family for about two years. I actually got the sack from there. I had a sweet tooth and every time I went past the cupboard in the kitchen I would take a marshmallow until there were none left. When the woman I worked for found this out she called me a thief. <sup>MSD</sup> came to the house and told me I had to leave.
55. After I left I was given a job as a cook at the Barnardo's home in Greenwood. I was now about sixteen or seventeen. I hadn't been given any training as a cook. I wasn't there that long.
56. I think that I was still being looked after by Barnardo's at this time. I have seen some of my records and they were still providing reports right up until I was engaged to my husband.
57. After I left Greenwood there was a woman, Mrs Tankard, from Barnardo's who would come and visit me. By this time I was in a boarding house for young girls. It wasn't a Barnardo's home. Mrs Tankard was a nasty woman. She would always comment on my weight. She would also say that I was jealous of my sister because I wouldn't

visit her. Before this no one from Barnardo's had ever come to visit me in person to see how I was getting on at my work placements.

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

58. Once I moved on from Barnardo's I started to do different jobs. I did some nursing jobs. I worked as an assistant nurse in a children's hospital. I also worked in a chemist shop for about ten years. I was doing a bit of waitressing as well at nights. It was at this time that I met my husband [REDACTED]

### *Child Migrant Trust*

59. I think I might have found out about the Child Migrant Trust through the Barnardo's newsletter which I received. I might have got in touch with them after that.
60. The Child Migrant Trust paid for us to go to England twice.
61. I asked the Salvation Army to help me trace my family. I knew that they were good at doing this sort of work. However they came back and said they couldn't find where my mother was living.
62. I spoke with Margaret Humphries, from the Child Migrant Trust, and asked if she could help me. I don't know how she went about tracing people but she was able to trace my mother. I didn't know why but at first Margaret said to me that I should maybe consider not contacting my mother. However I decided that I would physically go and see her.

### *Family contact*

63. When I arrived in Australia, Barnardo's gave me my mother's address in order that I could write to her. It was quite a novelty having this and for me to now have a mother for the first time in my life. I would write to her and send her mother's day cards.

Anytime that I asked her about why I had been put in care there was no response, she wouldn't discuss it. I kept in touch with my mother up until I was married. One of my friends was going to England and took my mother a wedding photograph. After this I stopped writing to her and I didn't know if she still stayed in the same place or not. That's why I had to ask for help tracing her when I wanted to get back in touch with her.

64. A few years ago my husband and myself went on a tour of Europe. We paid for this ourselves it wasn't through the Child Migrant Trust. We finished up our tour in England and I decided I wanted to visit my mother in Wolverhampton where she was now living. My mother was not expecting us when my husband and I turned up at her house.
65. When we arrived at my mother's house it was pouring with rain. My mother answered the door. As soon as she saw me she recognised me from the wedding photograph. She held my face in her hands and said my name. She then said that her other daughter was there and that she didn't know about me. This was [REDACTED] my half-sister.
66. We went in to the house to dry off. I said to [REDACTED] that I was a friend of a friend from Australia. [REDACTED] gave me her address in case we didn't have any where to stay that night. I thought this was very nice of her to do that. When I returned to Australia I wrote to [REDACTED] and told her who I was. [REDACTED] told me later that my mother denied this when she first spoke about it to her. [REDACTED] also told me about my brother, [REDACTED].
67. I spoke to [REDACTED] <sup>BKX</sup> about our mother and [REDACTED]. She was amazed.
68. When I found out about my brother, [REDACTED] my mother wouldn't tell me where he stayed or how to contact him. A girl that I went to school with at North Berwick who I kept in touch with said she would put an advert in the local paper in Scotland to try and trace him.

69. Someone told my brother [REDACTED] about the advert in the paper and we finally managed to get in touch with him. When [REDACTED] found out about BKX [REDACTED] and myself, he spoke about it to my mother. Again she denied this at first. [REDACTED] never knew anything about BKX [REDACTED] and I.
70. I have visited [REDACTED] in Scotland. He stays on the Isle of Skye. We don't always see eye to eye. I think BKX [REDACTED] gets on better with him.
71. Once my mother admitted who BKX [REDACTED] and I were to the family, things were okay. I would say I had a good relationship with my mother after this. She died when she was 99. That was how old she was the last time I saw her.

### *Nationality*

72. I still see myself as Scottish. I don't regret ending up in Australia. I would say it was the best thing that ever happened to me. I have had a good life and been married for 52 years.
73. I didn't have a passport when I came to Australia. We had a group certificate that all our details were on. I applied for a British passport and initially travelled on this. I then got myself an Australian passport. There was no problems obtaining either of these.

### **Impact**

74. Barnardo's was always a very positive experience for me. It was my family that I was disappointed in.
75. When we were sent to Australia there wasn't any choice. We just had to go. I look on us as a stolen generation.

76. The lack of choice I had when I was in care has stayed with me. I think it was bit degrading. I didn't have any choices when I came to Australia. It was just accepted as I was living in a home. It was difficult for me when I saw other kids with their parents.
77. I think that my time in care was good for me. It was disciplined and strict but I don't think this was a bad thing. Apart from what Mr <sup>BDO</sup> did I was never mistreated.
78. I have watched the film Oranges and Sunshine. I thought that it was very accurate. When I saw it I was very emotional.

### Records

79. Barnardo's have all my records from my time in care. About twenty years ago they provided me with a copy of them. I still haven't read them all. It was quite upsetting reading them over. Barnardo's offered me counselling if I wanted.
80. Reading my records I don't think that my mother and father were married when they had me. This might be another reason for <sup>BKX</sup> and I being put into care. I also found out from my records that my mother owed money to Barnardo's when I was in care and hadn't paid this back.
81. Barnardo's were able to provide me with a lot of photographs from my time in care with them.
82. 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.....<sup>MPC</sup>

Dated.....1-6-'2019