

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PYJ

Support person present: No

1. My name is PYJ. My date of birth is 1966. My contact details are known to the Inquiry. My maiden surname was PYJ and I am giving this statement in relation to my brother PYI who died at the age of nine on 1972.

### Background at home

2. I was one of ten children. was the oldest born in 1959 then there was in 1960, PYF in 1961, PYI who we called PYI was born on 1962, in 1964, myself then in 1967, the twins and in 1969 and then in 1970. My brother died two years ago from cancer and died in 1988 following an accident.
3. As children we had everything we needed and had great fun. Our dad, , wasn't an amazing provider and kind of did his own thing. He was a clever man but didn't like being told what to do. He seemed to have lots of different jobs and started jobs that he didn't need to commit to. He did have some good jobs when he was young when he emigrated to Canada and worked in a bank then worked in a gold mine. He wasn't around a lot of the time and spent a good bit of his time in the pub where he was well liked. I think he was too young to be married with ten children. My dad didn't have a

great relationship with PYI because PYI was quite difficult and didn't always try very hard or do his best at things.

4. Our mum, [REDACTED], was a brilliant mum and still is. She is a kind, caring, gentle Christian. She had her first child at the age of eighteen. She worked and did various jobs just to bring money into the house. She was always there for us. We were well fed and basically it was a good, busy but fun house. We weren't spoiled in any way but we were happy and I have fond memories of my childhood. We also had brilliant grandparents. We were regularly visited by aunts, uncles and cousins and were a big family unit.
5. We were born and brought up in Stirling. Initially we lived in a flat in [REDACTED] in the Raploch area then moved to [REDACTED] which is where we were when PYI died. When I was eight we moved to [REDACTED] which is also in Stirling.
6. Myself and all my siblings got on really well at St Mary's school in Raploch and were all pretty bright. We were all quite competitive too, in a good way and most of us were conformists. PYI wasn't a conformist but I think that was because he was bored at school.

PYI [REDACTED]

7. I think my brother PYI's troubles started at school. They didn't know what to do with a boy who knew all the stuff and was bored at school so he was probably seen as the class clown. My mum later told me that they tested his IQ when he started at school and it was 140 which is high. PYI just didn't want to be there. He wanted to be at home with his dog which he loved. Sometimes our dog followed us to school so he would take it back but would not return to school. I assume this is why PYI had a social worker, who I now know was called Miss KYO, and I remember her coming to the house sometimes before PYI went into care. She sat and talked to all the children around the table.

8. My dad would sometimes hit us if we were naughty and that was normal and accepted back then. Apparently my dad couldn't deal with PYI and was always punishing him. PYF and [REDACTED] were naughty too and my dad would lock them in the bathroom and put PYI in the cupboard under the stairs. It was cold and had a concrete floor. My dad would do this to them if they were laughing or carrying on in bed. I know my mum used to go to the Women's Guild and when she came home she would hear PYI crying in the cupboard so would let him out. I know my dad had mental health issues and was on antidepressants most of his life. Alcohol wouldn't have been the best thing for him but he liked the pub. He wasn't in the best place to deal with seven boys that could cause a bit of a ruckus.

*Admission to Corsbie Hall*

9. I have spoken to other family members and been told that PYI along with three other boys were suspected of setting fire to a haystack and PYI was brought home by a Sergeant Malcolmson from the police. I don't think he was charged because he was just a little boy but I am not sure about the other boys who were older. I believe that this was the crux, and it wasn't long after this, that PYI was put into care.
10. I was only six when PYI went into care. All I remember is the angst of it all. PYI didn't want to go and my mum didn't want him to go but my dad felt it was the right thing for PYI. It was the social worker, Miss KYO, who came for him. My image of Miss KYO is of her being like the wicked witch from the Wizard of Oz. She was instrumental in persuading my parents that it was the best thing for PYI and recommended Corsbie Hall School. My dad didn't need much persuasion because he was at the end of his tether with PYI and he was the major decision maker in the house. I suppose my parents were young and naïve about it all and believed her.
11. I think it could have been around [REDACTED] 1972 that he went to Corsbie Hall because I remember him coming home at Easter.



## **Corsbie Hall, Thornton, Fife**

12. Corsbie Hall was a school for mentally challenged, backward or wayward boys which officially opened in 1969. Initially it was just for boys but around the time that PYI was there girls were resident too. The age range for the boys was from six up to twelve or maybe fourteen. The age range for the girls was from six up to sixteen. There was another school which SNR ran in Newton Stewart in Dumfries.

### *Running away from Corsbie Hall*

13. After PYI went to Corsbie Hall, I am aware that he was running away and my granny has since told me that he would go to her in Stirling. Most of the time he ran away, as far as I am aware, he came home. I only remember one occasion when he came home because he had been smoking and I told my mum. PYI got a leathering from my dad for it and I felt really bad for telling on him. I expected PYI to be really annoyed with me but he wasn't. PYI never told me anything about the school. If he did, I was too young to remember it now.
14. A friend took my dad up to Corsbie Hall at various points to take PYI back after he had run away and they wouldn't allow my dad into the building to see the place. Sometimes it was the police that took PYI back.
15. I am now aware that PYI had written a letter to my mum only a few days before he died. I am still trying to find this letter to make it available to the Inquiry but my mum isn't aware that I have come forward to speak to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry. In the letter PYI said that he had run away twelve times and promised that he wouldn't run away again.

### *Circumstances around PYI's death*

16. It was only a few days after he had sent this letter that he ran away again with other boys and was killed. I don't know who these other boys were. They got to an area in Fife near the M9 motorway. Apparently there was a farmer there so they ran away in

different directions. PYI ran onto the motorway and was hit by a car. This happened on the 1972 and he was in hospital in a coma until the 1972 when his life support machine was switched off. The medical staff said he wasn't going to recover. My mother had to make the decision on her own to switch off his life support because my dad was too fragile.

17. From talking to my family over the years I have been told there was never any contact from the Corsbie Hall School with my family. Miss KYO, the social worker, was the person who came and told my family about the accident. I am not sure if there was a phone call first to our neighbours because we didn't have a phone, to tell my parents and they got a lift up to the hospital. I don't think the police came but they may have been in contact at some point. My mum was at the hospital in Edinburgh every day after that until he died. There were teachers from PYI's school at his funeral but there wasn't a representative from Corsbie Hall.
18. As far as I am aware the police did not carry out any investigation into the circumstances of PYI's death.

#### **Disclosures of abuse at Corsbie Hall.**

19. My sister told me over the years that PYI used to tell her that the staff used to watch him in the shower. I don't think he named who the staff were. He never said that anything else happened or that they did anything to him. He didn't tell his brothers this because it wouldn't have been manly to do so.
20. When PYI ran away, he would often go to our Granny's house, my dad's mum. When he got home or to our granny's he would always say he was starving and be looking for food. She has told me that she would feed him and it used to break her heart that she couldn't just keep and look after PYI.

21. My mum also told me that PYI used to hold onto her leg and tell her that he didn't want to go back and he would be crying. I can only imagine how much that must have broken her heart.

### Impact

22. I have been told that PYI was always angry when he came home from Corsbie Hall. I don't really remember any difference but all my brothers used to fight quite a lot anyway. My brothers over the years have told me that PYI was definitely more aggressive when he came home. My mum, dad, granny and my older brothers also noticed that he was considerably thinner than he had been and that was quite something because we were all quite thin anyway. They had definitely seen a visible deterioration in him and he hadn't even been at Corsbie Hall very long.
23. The impact on my family following the death of PYI was massive. It was like a bomb going off. When he died it was awful. Our lives were never the same. Some of my brothers lost a lot of respect for people and took rebellious turns. It particularly affected [REDACTED] and PYF who were closest in age to PYI. There was no counselling available at this time. PYF kept on track at school but he definitely became quite withdrawn. [REDACTED] rebelled big time probably because he was extremely close to PYI. He ended up at St Joseph's List D school in Tranent.
24. We previously had a big happy family house and PYI's death led to a lot of unhappiness within our home. My parents started fighting and arguing a lot. My dad found solace in the pub where he got sympathy from his drinking friends. My mum and dad never really sat down with us and had a mature conversation about it. Mum and dad eventually split up although they were friends latterly. My dad died fourteen years ago. Over the years we always speak about PYI and keep him alive in our hearts. We never forget his birthday and have a toast for him if we are all together.
25. I have always been protective of my own children when I was bringing them up. Probably more so because of what happened to PYI.



## Records

26. I recently decided that I needed more information about PYI's time in care and the circumstances around his death. It almost became an obsession. I wanted to know why he was put in care. I wanted to see the police records, the school records, social work records and Corsbie Hall records. Stirling council had nothing, Fife council had nothing. I tried Fife council because the school was in their area, they may hold something about his education. We did not get anything from anywhere. I cannot believe that a child has died in their care and they do not hold any record of it. It was almost like PYI didn't exist. We eventually got some records from the National Records of Scotland in Edinburgh but it took over a year.
27. My niece works for Stirling council and she told me that there were a whole lot of boxes being taken away from the office. They related to Barnardos and it was for the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry. She wondered if the Inquiry may have already removed any files about PYI.

### *National Records, Edinburgh*

28. On 4 February 2021 we made an appointment to go to the National Records of Scotland. The girl there was brilliant and she looked everything out for us. I went with my brother PYF and we were there for about five hours. They wouldn't let us remove any of the documents but allowed us to take photographs of them.
29. One document I found indicated that at the same time when PYI was at Corsbie Hall there was one teacher working there who had worked in London who had been charged with paedophilia and had a case that was ongoing.

### *Report by ex-teacher KUR*

30. There was another teacher, KUR, who the boys thought off as a hero and only worked at Corsbie Hall for a short while on a temporary basis. In the records there was

a handwritten report which KUR wrote only a few days after PYI was killed. He had left Corsbie Hall by the time PYI died.

31. In his report he says that on one occasion PYI another boy, and two girls ran away from Corsbie Hall and turned up at his house in Edinburgh. I have no idea how they knew where he lived and that is quite worrying in itself. He said that he had given them biscuits and told them that he would need to take them back to the school. PYI told him that he was really hungry and that they weren't feeding them at Corsbie Hall.
32. KUR goes on in his report about how the children were generally dirty and that at the school there was no curriculum for them. The school had wanted him to stay but he realised he couldn't do anything with the boys on his own. He says that most of the teachers didn't have any teaching qualifications and the headmaster wasn't even a teacher and apparently had only worked with children in London in relation to psychiatric issues.
33. KUR also talks about how the boys weren't allowed to talk at mealtimes. If one boy was caught talking at the dining table, every boy would be made to stand up and hold their hands out in front of them for a period of time, maybe twenty minutes. This was the housemaster who would make them do this and they weren't allowed to lower their hands until he said so. After dinner they would then be put straight to bed. KUR goes on to say how there were no games for the boys to play with, not even a football. In this handwritten report KUR lists a number of issues he had with Corsbie Hall and also the advantages of such a school.
34. SNR at Corsbie Hall made out that PYI and another boy had run away when PYI died and that PYI was the instigator in them absconding even though there was lots of other information about other boys regularly running away before PYI even got there. SNR was trying to almost blame PYI for his own death.



*Willie Hamilton MP report*

35. I found reports from Willie Hamilton who was the MP for Fife. He fought to stop Corsbie Hall from opening. There were newspaper cuttings, and Hansard records of him passionately fighting for it never to open. This was around 1967. He had been to the building and described it as an old musty smelly building not at all fit for its purpose and the conditions were not suitable for children. He also said there was no healthcare and that the teachers weren't qualified. He said there was cruelty where corporal punishment was dished out for fun. He was still fighting for it to close days after PYI [REDACTED] died. The owner of Corsbie Hall was given permission right up to 1971 to get all the necessary certification for the school to remain open. All the time Willie Hamilton was fighting to close it. He even wrote to my mum after PYI [REDACTED] died to pass his condolences.
36. When Margaret Thatcher was the secretary of state for England a man called Munro was the secretary of state for Scotland. Apparently, the boys who had been staying at Corsbie Hall had gone back home for the Christmas holidays and this was just before PYI [REDACTED] went there. Margaret Thatcher had fought for the boys to be taken out of this school because she said it was not suitable and she was successful in their removal. Munro however said that it was suitable. Apparently, the English boys went on Granada television to highlight how hungry they were because they didn't get enough food at Corsbie Hall. They also said they were not given any underwear, were dressed like tramps and weren't given any education. All they were doing was gardening and landscaping. It was unbelievable that they could be treated like this. In another article it states that the boys reported that the staff were watching them in the shower.
37. There are other reports in the records, so it was obviously being inspected by people like Her Majesty's Inspectorate. They said everything was okay. There was one incident recorded where two brothers had complained that the punishment went beyond what could be deemed to be reasonable. They said they weren't just slapped and that they were actually beaten. This was before PYI [REDACTED] had arrived there. One of these boys appeared to fit the description of possibly being mentally retarded and the brother was far more intelligent. Her Majesty's Inspectors interviewed all the other

boys at Corsbie Hall but they said the teacher, who the complaint was about, only sometimes slapped them. The onus was put back on the boys who complained and it was accepted that was the way things were at Corsbie Hall.

#### *School diary of events*

38. Within the records we found a document called 'Corsbie Hall's diary of events' and covers the dates from 24 February 1972 until 14 July 1972. There is an entry on [REDACTED] 1972, which is the day PYI [REDACTED] was hit by the car. All it says is '*four boys absconded, one knocked down on motorway and later died, no blame attached to school*'. That is all that was recorded for the death of a nine year old boy.

#### **Unanswered questions**

39. I have so many questions which I can't get the answers to. PYI [REDACTED] was put into a school for mentally challenged/ backward or wayward boys. He definitely wasn't backward. I can't understand how PYI [REDACTED] was able to run away so often in such a short period of time. Why was there no security at the school? They were supposed to be in charge of him.
40. Who was looking after him at Corsbie Hall and how badly was he abused? What was he running away from that must have been so bad that he ran away to face my father and get punished by him? I am sure that had PYI [REDACTED] been left to live at home, my mum and dad would have managed and got him through it.
41. I also can't understand why such a school was able to operate for around two years without any certification and without qualified teaching staff.

### **Lessons to be learned/Hopes for the Inquiry**

42. I think the main thing to protect children in the future is not to take them from their home environment unless it is absolutely necessary. Looking back PYI didn't need to be taken away. Myself and my other siblings were successful in their careers and there is no reason why PYI, if given some help, couldn't have been successful too. I am sure my dad will have regretted signing PYI over to the authorities.
43. Employers at places like Corsbie Hall must know the background of the individual they are employing and whether the person has ever been at court for anything. I know there are now PVG checks done which will reveal if the person has a criminal record.
44. I hope that nothing like this can happen again in the future. The main thing I would like to see would be for the authorities to apologise to my mother. She has felt guilty and suffered almost her whole life. Just for my mum to get some recognition and for someone to say sorry for what happened to PYI and for not looking after him properly and that his death was their fault and not hers. She would be ecstatic and although she is 82 it would mean a lot to her. She doesn't know we have spoken to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry.

### **Other information**

45. I wish I had gone to Edinburgh thirty years ago and seen these records. At that time the perpetrators of the abuse would still have been alive, at least the one who I later found out to have been a paedophile. His name is in the records but I cannot remember it and it will be on the photographs on my phone but I don't really want to find it again. They would probably be dead by now anyway.
46. Corsbie Hall advertised that they were integrating the boys into the local town of Thornton. Apparently, there were a number of local people who didn't even know that Corsbie Hall existed.



47. I am so thankful that Willie Hamilton MP got involved because he was instrumental in the whole thing and highlighting the issues at Corsbie Hall. Corsbie Hall closed down shortly after PYI [REDACTED] died, but it was nothing to do with PYI [REDACTED]'s death and it was more down to Willie Hamilton.
48. 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... PYJ [REDACTED] .....

Dated... 3/3/23 .....