

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PIE

Support person present: No

1. My name is ^{PIE} [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1945. My contact details are known to the inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My mum's name was [REDACTED] and my dad's name was [REDACTED]. I had a brother, [REDACTED], who is about a year and a half older than me, and a younger sister, [REDACTED], who is about a year and a half younger than me.
3. I was a war wean. When all the soldiers came back from the war, they had nowhere to stay and people were farmed out to army camps. They were shoved in there with their families. My family and I stayed in [REDACTED] Camp. It was in amongst the trees, near [REDACTED]. I can remember being there and staying in a Nissen hut. Every now and again, I drive past and I wonder if the concrete's still there but I've never stopped the car to go and have a look.
4. We then went to a place called [REDACTED] Camp. It belonged to Lanarkshire County Council. A whole bus load of people went to [REDACTED]. It was at the back of Bishopbriggs and Auchinairn. There was a camp up in Garscadden and a camp up in Drumchapel as well. It was next to a pit but it's all flattened now. There were a lot of Nissen huts. There were cottage-type houses for the soldiers and they were alright. My best memories are from there. My playground was from Hogganfield Loch right up to the Campsie Hills. We used to walk it, even at that age.

5. My father worked on the farm. We were called squatters. I didn't know what a squatter was. We used to get the school bus and get the service bus home. This woman on the bus called me a squatter, people who don't pay rent and lives where they shouldn't. My mother did pay rent. We had all our rent books. I did a bit of research into the camp in Kirkintilloch Library. The librarian said that she often wondered what had happened to the people who lived there. I told her that I was a wee boy at the time. We got talking and she was interested in what I was saying.
6. In 1949, my mother went into hospital and my father was at sea. My brother, sister and I went into the Seamen's Mission at Rhu. Because my father was at sea, it was the place to go. I don't remember anybody explaining what was happening, but weans weren't consulted in those days.

The Seamen's Mission at Rhu

7. The place I went to was known to me as The Seamen's Mission at Rhu. I didn't know that the Gaelic name for it was Lagarie. It was only when I saw Lagarie described as The Seamen's Mission in the newspaper that I realised it was the same place. I've spoken to my sister about Rhu, but she can't remember anything about it. She was only two and a half, three years old when we went there. I reckon I was about three and a half, four years old when I went there.
8. I don't remember being taken to Rhu or who took us. I just remember the big house with the old-fashioned, dark oak furniture. I think there were three floors. I remember going in and seeing the staircases for the first time. There was no consultation or talking to you, you were just in and told, "That's your bed." I didn't know what I was going into. I don't really remember how I felt. It was all new. I didn't know that I was going to be abused. I didn't know what abuse was. I didn't know about these things. The next minute, someone was being bad to you and giving you doings at that age.
9. There was a matron in charge, but I don't remember her name. I can't really remember what she looked like. She wore one of those matron's hats and she got called "Matron".

If you saw her, you kept out of her road. She was a bad person. I don't remember the names of any of the staff. I don't remember any of the staff being considerate, not one. I don't remember any of the staff talking to me like I was a child. You watched them and you kept them at arm's length. I think the staff were all women, apart from the gardener. I remember seeing him when we were put out in the big park. I don't know whether he lived on the grounds.

10. There were quite a few children there. I think there were possibly more than twenty. I don't remember any of the other children. I must have talked to other children, but I don't remember it. There were children who were older than me. I don't know whether they were ten years old or teenagers, but they were big boys and lassies. Everybody was old to me at that age. The children that are a wee bit older are likely to be dead now. I don't know how long they were in there. Their fathers maybe died in the war and the people who put them in there didn't know what they were doing, didn't know what was going on.

Routine at The Seamen's Mission

Mornings and bedtime

11. My brother and I shared a room. It was the last room at the top of the house. It was just the two of us in there. I can't remember whether my sister was in a room on her own, but she wasn't with us. Our room wasn't that big. It had the two beds in it. We could look out of the window to the main gate, right out towards Helensburgh. We could see people coming into the grounds. I don't remember who or what woke us up in the morning. I suppose I might have been able to dress myself at that age, but I don't know. I remember going up to bed and the bed was made. I don't remember cocoa or anything like that.

Washing/bathing

12. I don't know how often we got a bath, but I remember going into dirty water. There would be two or three in the bath at the one time. That water would be used for four or five of us. You never got a fresh bath. It was as if we were cattle. There would be two nurses washing us. We wore the clothes we went in with. I don't remember getting any clothes there.

Mealtimes

13. We ate at a big long table in a dining hall, like in Oliver Twist. I don't watch Oliver Twist because I can relate to it and it brings back bad memories. That's what the matron was like, something out of Oliver Twist. I don't remember supper or anything like that. The only meal that I remember is the porridge and how it was served. At breakfast time, if you weren't first you didn't get anything. We were given porridge. Children at that age would normally be encouraged to put sugar in it. We didn't get anything like that.
14. The older children, who were at the top of the table, got the milk. The matron didn't bother. There was nobody making sure that the younger ones got enough. It was just plain porridge and no milk because the older ones got it all. Nobody went round putting it in for the younger ones. The wee ones, like myself, were left to fend for ourselves. Porridge is rotten without milk. You wouldn't give a wean porridge at that age or any age, unless it has something in it to make it worth eating. I ate the porridge and that was it. I don't know what happened if you didn't eat it. I just know it was rotten.

Daytime activities/leisure time

15. I was too young to go to school. We would be put out to play in the big field on the grounds. We couldn't play on the swings because the big children played on the swings. It was just like we were cattle, putting us out in the big field. We were stuck out there at three years old and that was that, making your own entertainment.

16. When it was raining, they put us in a big room. There was a ball which had segments with different colours. It was full of paper. The older ones would kick that about. The wee ones had nothing. I don't remember the staff being involved or organising any games or activities. The matron would come in and play the piano. Her two songs were Lavender Blue and Tiptoe the Tulips. I hate those songs. It was miserable. Nobody read to us or let us draw or anything like that. If they had read books to us, I would remember them the way I remember those two songs. There was no religious element at the home.

17. My brother got into a room. I don't know how he got in, but he did. It was absolutely full of brand new toys. You had to walk between them, there were so many toys. I remember one was a wee carousel with aeroplanes on it. The aeroplanes were at different heights so that when you spun it, it looked as if they were flying. That was what I used to play with. We had to do it dead quietly, shut the door and not tell anybody. Those toys were never put out for the children. Nobody else knew that they were there. There were no trips out or anything like that. If we'd gone on a trip, I'd have done a runner.

Christmas and birthdays

18. I don't know whether I was there over Christmas. I didn't have a birthday till I was seven so I don't know whether I was there for a birthday either. I do remember getting a wee train. I think it came from Rhu. They might have given it to me when I went in, but I'm not sure. I had it with me when I went to school in Auchinairn, after I left Rhu.

Visits

19. I remember that my uncles, my mum's brothers, came down to visit. They must have been teenagers at the time. They brought us socks. I don't know why, when I think back. They brought us oranges. They took us out for a wee walk along the beach. There was a big navy shed on the water side, outside the home. We had our oranges while we were out. We couldn't take them back to the home in case the staff took them

off us. The hardest part was when my uncles went away. I remember greeting. They said they'd come and get us and they gave us hope.

20. There must have been other visitors, but I don't remember them. I don't remember seeing a doctor or anything like that. Nobody ever explained anything to us or sat down and spoke to us. I remember my mum coming. I think it was when we were about to go home. I don't know whether she went away and then came back again. I'm really not too sure about that.

Running away

21. My brother and I tried to get away three times. My brother was the instigator of us running away. He was older than me. One of the times me and my brother decided to run away, we got through the gate and ran. The police got a hold of us along the promenade. We were greeting. We told him what was going to happen to us if he took us back. He didn't hold us by our hands. He held the two of us by the wrists, as if he was taking a prisoner. The first policeman I ever met and he was holding us by the wrists and dragging us. We were panicking and screaming, "Don't take us back." He didn't care. We got taken back to the home, taken up the stairs and we were battered by the matron.
22. That didn't stop us from running away a second time. We got outside the gates on two occasions and we were caught by the police both times. We got battered the second time as well. We ran away again a third time. We didn't even get out of the main gate before one of the members of staff caught us as she was coming in. She seemed to know that we were going. She wasn't polite either. I thought she might be a wee bit concerned, but we were taken right into the home and she said, "I caught them trying to get out the main gate." We were taken up the stairs and we got another doing from the matron. The staff member who brought us back knew what was going to happen to us. She could have just taken us back and told us not to do it again. She must have heard us screaming when the matron was hitting us. That's the sore part. I couldn't say anything decent about any of the staff. They knew what was happening.

Abuse at Rhu

23. On one occasion, we were stuck out in the big area at the back of the home. There was an outside toilet. I couldn't reach the handle on the toilet door. I couldn't get in and I soiled myself. There was no care. There was no concern. I got a doing. I remember them mouthing off at me, shouting. One of the nurses dragged me. I was rough handled, but I don't remember being hit. I remember being flung in a cold bath with cold water. I was getting washed down. She wasn't good about it. I was then flung up to bed for the rest of the day. I didn't get any tea or anything. I was in this room and put to bed and told to stay there. It happened again on another occasion because I still couldn't reach the toilet handle.
24. When I was left in the room after soiling myself, I never got fed. I can't remember the teas at any time, but I never got fed in that room. I didn't get out until the next morning. I don't know whether the room was locked. I don't remember anybody coming in to check on me. I didn't want anybody coming in anyway because I never knew when I would get another doing. I remember that I was quite happy if I didn't hear anybody coming up those stairs.
25. My sister was always wetting the bed. The matron took me out and I had to go into my sister's room and I had to use her bed. It was soaking wet. I had to lie in that for about three nights. I was trying to sleep in the dry bit. My sister had been taken out of that room and I was put in there, away from my brother. I don't know why the matron did that, you'd have to ask her that. It's just what happened.
26. When we ran away and the police man took us back to the home, my brother and I were beaten by the matron. She held us by the wrist. I remember when she was dragging us up the stairs and I knew what was going to happen. I can still imagine that and remember it. She had a long, thin belt. She laid into my brother with it. She used it like a whip. It didn't matter where it hit you. I was standing there watching it and then I was next. I got belted wherever it hit me, my bare legs, my back, everywhere. She was shouting abuse while she hit us. We were then flung into bed and left. I think the matron took pleasure in beating us. You couldn't hit people like that unless you enjoyed

it. I don't remember seeing a doctor while I was there. If I had, the marks would have been there. I remember being marked.

27. I think the staff were all as one. I don't remember a kind member of staff. There was no running up to get a cuddle, the way weans do. We were always wary of the staff. It was just a miserable place to be. I have no pleasant memories from my time there. You never knew what was coming. I'm thinking like an adult now and I was three or four at the time. I can't turn around and say how I felt because I didn't know how to feel. I was just scared. I had blind trust in adults and it didn't work out. I learned that adults were to be avoided.

Leaving Rhu

28. I don't know how long I was in there. I don't know whether it was months or longer. I didn't even know the names of the days at that age. It was long enough to imprint on my brain what a horrible place it was. It was just a hellish place to be. I can't even think of a sunny day in Rhu. That sums it up. There was only animosity. I don't remember a kind word.
29. Nobody sat children down and explained things to them in those days. You were merchandise. You weren't considered as a person, but I was too young to know these things at the time. I didn't know when I was going to be leaving. It wasn't a case of someone sitting us down and telling us that we were going home in a number of days' time. I think my mother and uncle came for us in a car, but I really don't know. I didn't know what I was going out to. At that age, I just lived for the moment. It's just a blank, but I ended up in my own house. If I soiled myself there but I didn't get a doing.

Life after leaving care

30. After leaving Rhu, I was back living at the camp with my mum, dad, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I look back on it and realise that I was lucky. I didn't know I was enjoying

the camp at the time. I only realised it when people left, thinking that they were bettering themselves. They used to come back to the camp to play.

31. I never knew that I had a birthday until I was seven. I got a birthday card from my friend's mother. These things were kept secret, "Don't tell him it's his birthday or he'll be looking for a present."
32. We moved from one end of Glasgow to another. It was a whole new world. We moved from [REDACTED] camp to Castlemilk. It was a big move. We had a brand new house with an inside toilet. It turned out it was badly designed. They were cold houses. In those days, you sat a quali exam. If you passed, you went to a senior secondary and if you failed you went to a junior secondary school. In the transition period of me moving from a Dumbartonshire school to a Lanarkshire school, I didn't go to school for the last few weeks of term. I didn't get a chance to sit the exam, so I was sent to Crookston Street Junior Secondary School. I enjoyed secondary school more than primary school. I was made a prefect. I was nominated to go to Glenmore Lodge in the Cairngorms for a month, which was brilliant.
33. There were no secondary schools in Castlemilk. There used to be a caravan of buses. I didn't learn anything about religion until I went to a Protestant school in Glasgow. There was no division when we stayed in the camp. It was only when I was eleven or twelve, going to school in the Gorbals, I heard buses of kids singing the sash. I'd never heard those songs before. We were living in a bubble in the camp.
34. I left school at the age of fourteen. I got a job as a fireplace builder. Even in those days, the wage was terrible. I was supposed to be an apprentice but I was just a labourer. My hands were so bad that I couldn't shut them because of the dust and the dirt. I then worked in the leatherworks in Bridgeton. I went on to become a joiner. That was my forte. It wasn't being a labourer. I enjoyed it. I remember seeing all the wood when I first went on a site and I was afraid. Later on, I would look at all the wood and think it was lovely.

35. I married my wife and we lived in Castlemilk. In those days, my wife was prescribed Valium and she took them like sweets. It ruined the marriage. It ruined everything for us.
36. Our children were taken into care. They were in Quarrier's. I blame the social work for that. In those days, a man was meant to work. If a man didn't work, he was idle. Men weren't meant to be looking after weans. If a man did that in the 1960s, the attitude was that he was lazy and he didn't want to work.
37. I went to Quarrier's every second week to visit my children. Their mother was supposed to go up the other week. The first time that I went, a wee boy came to the door and shouted to my boy, "Here's your dad to see you." That child had never seen me before. I met a lot of parents going up to Quarrier's, but a lot of kids didn't have anybody coming to see them. They'd be standing at the bus stop to see if their mum or dad was coming up.
38. My boy played football at Quarrier's. There was a coach called Mr QDY. He was a great guy. He was brilliant with the kids. I can't say anything bad about the place. Cliff Richard was there one day. I went up to visit and he was up on the stage with a guy on the piano. When he played, "Living Doll," all the women started screaming and the weans panicked.
39. I was lucky that my children had good house parents. When my children first went into Quarrier's, they were in a cottage with one woman trying to control twenty children. QFO/QJK took over and they had their own family. Mr QFO was brilliant with the kids. He had no time for people who were messing about, but he used to repair the bikes and things. A lot of adults didn't like him, but he was great with kids and he was a nice guy.
40. My children were in Quarrier's for about five years, maybe less. It seemed like a long time. When they came out, they went to stay with their mum. She was being backed up by social work. They actually talked me into signing the house over to her, my

house. A woman called Mrs Stanley was the only social worker who considered me as a person. She helped me and I ended up getting a house in the Penilee area of Glasgow. I managed to get three of my children staying with me, but the youngest stayed with her mother. Mrs Stanley was then taken off the case. I didn't get any help when I moved into the house. I didn't get furniture. I never got beds or anything. My wife got everything. She got Christmas parcels and all the rest of it, but nobody came to my door. I just got on with it.

41. My youngest child is dead. The social work wouldn't let my youngest child come to my house. She [REDACTED] and killed herself. My daughter's dead and I blame her psychiatrist. I hate psychiatrists because of him. I'm anti-establishment because of that. I've got a son who works for British Aerospace in Saudi Arabia. I've got a daughter who works as an accountant and another daughter who works as a nurse. I'm proud of them all. The one that I worry about isn't here. I blame the establishment for that. When I read about social workers and their indifference and all the bad things that they do to kids, I know what it's like, to talk to somebody and be shoved aside. That's what's happening and that's how I felt. My daughter was flung to the wolves.

Impact

42. I remember having nightmares after I left Rhu. I would have nightmares about people shouting and bawling, storms, then it would all quieten down. My mother and father would argue in my dreams. They'd start just talking then it would build up and build up to them screaming and bawling and I'd be in the middle. It would then calm down again and then it would all start up again. I'd dream about getting a doing and then it would stop. I'd wake up. I remember going out of my own bed and into my mum's bed after these nightmares. At that age, I didn't think it was because I had been in Rhu but possibly getting beaten up could have caused it.
43. The big navy shed outside of the home was there for years and years. When I was thirteen, I was touring Scotland with the school. We went through Helensburgh and there it was. I had always planned to go back and see the home again. I'm glad I didn't.

It seems that abuse went on and on there for years and years. I used to go to Helensburgh regularly to do charity work. As soon as I see the word Helensburgh, it brings it all back and makes me think of that place. It's just annoying. Whether you like it or not, it's a part of your history and it's the bad part of it.

44. As I get older, my time at Rhu comes into my mind more. I can't avoid it. It was just after the War. Things were chaotic. Britain was still rationing things until 1954. People were too busy trying to survive at that time, but there was no excuse whatsoever for what they did to us in that home. There's no excuse for battering weans with belts or just being bad for the sake of being bad. It's hard to think back to how I felt when I was three and a half, but I've never forgotten it. It makes me feel that it's in my past and I can't wipe it out. The memories of that place will be there until the day I die. They're so ingrained, you just can't wipe it out.
45. I don't use the word hate, but I know what hate is. It's one of the ugliest words because of its meaning. People say, "I don't like that, I hate that." They don't know what they're saying. Hate really is hate. It's the worst expression and it's the worst emotion you can have. I hate that matron. She's dead and I still can't forgive her. There's nothing to forgive and everything to hate. It's not going to consume me. I think my experiences in Rhu made me more lenient when I meet people. I don't hate anybody. People get up your nose, but I don't hate them. When I moved to Castlemilk I went to school in the Gorbals where I saw the racist side of people. There were guys from India and I would talk away to them. I got ostracised by the white guys. I never had those prejudices. I react to people the way they react to me.
46. I don't know how my experiences in Rhu affected the rest of my life. It's made an impression on me, without a doubt. Recently, I've been getting depressed but I don't think it's because of what happened to me in Rhu. I've never sought any help or support because of what happened. I hate psychiatrists because of what they did to my daughter. I am what I am and what you see is what you get. I had a good time at secondary school. There were opportunities. I think my experiences at secondary school had an influence on my life. The teachers in my secondary school were great. However, everything in my life relates to the time that I was in that place. The

memories of what happened there will stay with me all my life. It didn't destroy me. If anything, you balance things out. I didn't allow the negatives to soak in.

Reporting of Abuse

47. I don't know whether I spoke about what I'd experienced in Rhu when I got home to my parents. I suppose I must have spoken to my brother and my mum and dad about it. I can't imagine not telling my parents what it was like. There was nothing they could do about it. They were fighting the establishment and it must have been hellish. As you get older, you start keeping it to yourself. You don't want to be common gossip. Nothing would come of me talking about it other than giving people something to talk about.
48. I watched a documentary about Lagarie on the telly. It was really sad. I believe it opened in 1949, when I went in. The staff must have been realising the freedom they had to do what they wanted with their perversions. There were people in there who got it worse than me. I said to myself, "Jesus, God. That's not right." It was terrible. Sailors were going in to abuse wee lassies. I don't know whether that happened when I was there. I was only three. There was a guy on the documentary who just couldn't get away from it because of what happened to his little sister. He was only seven at the time. What could he have done?
49. I realised that I wasn't the only one who had bad memories of that place, but I've never been in touch with anybody else who went there. The people who ran it were supposed to be church goers. You couldn't make it up. Their names have been vilified. Nuns are the same. Lourdes on Paisley Road West was notorious. Everybody knew what was going on, but the authorities just let it happen.
50. After the documentary, a number was given on the BBC to call Esther Rantzen. That was the first place that I called, thinking I could talk about how bad the place had been. It was a waste of time. It just told me that I should phone the police and didn't give me

any other information. I've never been in touch with the Sailors' Society. They were apologetic on that documentary. Did they know, did they turn a blind eye? You never know. It's all about trust.

51. I came forward to the Inquiry because I decided to tell someone about the abuse I suffered from the matron. It gives me satisfaction that there's another mark against her name. I still hate her and that's not going to change. She never got justice on this side of life but I like to think that she'll get justice after. I do believe that you judge yourself and you can't escape your own conscience. If there is a justice, that's where it'll come from. It's just not right. You can't do that and die and be in the same room as people who didn't live like that on earth.

Records

52. I've got a photo from the home in Rhu. I cut my brother out of it. He turned out really naughty. When my mother died, I didn't want my family and my grandkids asking who he was. When I look at the photo now, I'm sorry that I did it, but it seemed like the right thing to do at the time.
53. I went on the internet and tried to get the names of the children who had been in the home. It seems that they don't exist or they don't go back that far. I'm not very good with the internet. I'd like to get the history of the home and the people who were in it. I'd like to know if I've been registered as being there. I know I've been there and I don't need a piece of paper to prove that, but I'm curious about my records.

Lessons to be learned

- 54. It's an aggravating phrase, "should have". It's in the past tense and there's nothing you can do about it. You can bring things forward and try and make people aware of what happened. People need to listen to children. The policeman who held me by the wrists wasn't listening to me. I'll never forget that. We were going back to get a hiding, but he wasn't caring. It seems that the police in Helensburgh knew about it and did nothing. That's what makes it worse. The people at the top set the level of society.

- 55. They've not learned anything. I remember the case of Maria Colwell. It was the most tragic thing. I remember reading about it. They've learned nothing and that's the worst bit. They don't listen to children. The young lassies who were being sexually abused in Rotherham and Rochdale were telling the police what was happening to them and they were being ignored. It's criminal. That's the establishment and you're fighting the establishment. I'm giving my evidence to the Inquiry in the hope that it is going to help it a bit. There's nobody to charge, but at least Rhu will be exposed. I hope children's homes get decent people in to run them.

- 56. 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. PIE

Dated.....16.....*SEP* 2020.....