

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PTM

Support person present: No

1. My name is PTM, but I liked to be known as PTM. My date of birth is the 1960. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I was born in Crossmichael, Castle Douglas. My mother is called she is eighty, and my father was employed as a farm worker and with whom I had very little contact with is now deceased.
3. I have five siblings, who is sixty one, then myself, my brother who is deceased, and who is aged fifty five. My oldest brother, died a ago. He was sixty three.
4. The only memories of my life before care were discovered from a person who knew my mother and father.
5. This person informed me that my dad suffered from meningitis and there were a number of bad tempered alcohol fuelled incidents of abuse towards my mother which resulted in my father attempting to kill her. My mother couldn't cope with my father's abusive behaviour and caring for five children, so we were subsequently taken into care, I was aged at about six years old. I have no memory of any social services involvement at that time.

## Springbells Children's Home Annan

6. I don't recall how I arrived at Springbells, but I do remember being with my brothers

██████ and ██████ Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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### **Leaving Springbells**

25. At the age of about twelve years when I was in Primary six or seven I was told by Mrs Marriott that I was too old to be at Springbells and that [REDACTED] and I would be going to Merkland Children's home in Moffat. I believe that [REDACTED] went back to reside with my mother, and I think that [REDACTED] was placed into the Crichton Institution because he was unwell. I didn't think much about the move, I just thought that it was going to be much as the same as Springbells.

### **Merkland Children's Home Moffat.**

26. Merkland was a huge Victorian detached house, bigger than Springbells, with large gardens, they were colossal. The house was situated in a side street at Buccleuch place, it had large open gates with a huge lawn, vegetable garden and a large tree. The front door was massive and had a stained glass window and there were tiles on the floor. As you entered there was an office on the right hand side, and a sitting room on the left hand side. There was a basement downstairs with a toilet, a dining room, a laundry area and a kitchen with an annexe. Upstairs there was a toilet to the right, a bathroom, a massive big room with a fire escape and a huge bedroom. The staff

resided in two or three other rooms on the second floor. The home contained approximately twenty children mostly boys and maybe two girls.

27. When I initially arrived a man called RGE [REDACTED] was SNR [REDACTED], RGE [REDACTED] was a very fair man. I would address him as Mr RGE [REDACTED]. When I was aged at about thirteen RGE [REDACTED] was replaced by an individual called RGD [REDACTED].
28. RGD [REDACTED] was a very big guy, he was thick set with black wavy hair. RGD [REDACTED] was always dressed in a kilt with long socks and black brogues, he was a very imposing figure. RGD [REDACTED] was about fifty years old and he always referred to himself by his full title. RGD [REDACTED] was a bully and very intimidating. I distinctly remember him arriving, and he was always addressed by his full title.
29. There were about six members of staff, and the only other member of staff who sticks out was a young man with a trendy haircut who played rugby for Dalziel former pupils at Rugby.
30. The routine for the home was explained not by the staff but by the boys.

### **Routine at Merkland Children's Home.**

#### *Mornings and bedtime*

31. I slept in a dormitory with four boys on one side and four on the other side. [REDACTED] was in another dorm. I had a cabinet at the side of my bed for my clothes, which had to be folded and stacked and our names were printed in the neck of the clothes.
32. RGE [REDACTED] was [REDACTED] in the army, and the home was run like a military establishment. RGE [REDACTED] stayed on the top floor. RGE [REDACTED] used to get us up at around six in the morning, we had to make the perfect bed and then have a quick wash in a sink and get dressed. We were then made to stand at the end of our beds to be inspected. Everything was done in a military regimented way, everything was done to time.

33. We would then have to go out into the garden and dig the soil or cutting plants, we didn't have to do this at the weekend. We were in the garden for an hour or an hour and a half. At some point I would have to get the rolls from a shop in Moffat, I was given about seven or eight minutes to do this.
34. At about seven thirty we would all parade back into the house where we would bath and get into our school uniforms and have breakfast, and at eight fifty we would go to school.
35. We would get back from school at about three fifty five, we would change clothes and then we would be allowed to play out until teatime. After tea we would have chores to do. At about eight thirty we would be allowed in the play room for a short time watching the television, or playing outside. We may have had about half an hour for homework and then off to bed. You were on the go at all times.

*Mealtimes / food*

36. I don't remember much about the food, but what I do remember is that you were offered nothing else to eat if you didn't eat it, so I ate it. I recall having porridge, toast, rolls with marmalade and milk for breakfast.

*Washing and bathing*

37. We were filed into the bathroom every morning where there were two baths. The bathing was supervised and very quick but there was always plenty of soap and water.

*Clothing / uniform*

38. We had clothes to play in and to do the gardening in and we were supplied with a school uniform. The uniform was a grey jumper, grey trousers, a white shirt and a tie.

### *Leisure time*

39. I was allowed to play out in the gardens and on a Saturday I was given pocket money and allowed to go into Moffat for an hour. We would line up and [RGE] would give you the money and mark you off in the book. We had a playroom where we could play games and watch the television.

### *Trips and holidays*

40. I recall occasionally being taken in an army cadet bus to the swimming pool in Dumfries.
41. In the school holidays we were taken to the barracks in Berwick Upon Tweed for a two week holiday, although the routine there didn't differ from Merkland.

### *Schooling*

42. I attended at the Moffat Academy Primary school and latterly senior school, and I have very good memories of school. I was a very good football player.
43. There was a female teacher who everybody called "fish face" I can't remember her name and Tatty Shaw was the tech teacher.
44. I can recall that my PE teacher was called Stan Johnson, and my art teacher was called Mr David Black. I loved going into Mr Black's class he was a great teacher. Mr Black would always take me into his class when I was meant to be in the tech class.
45. At school all of the "Merkland boys," as they were called, were distinguishable by their very short haircut. Whenever I went to the barbers I would try and get my hair cut into a different style, but the barber would ignore me and cut it the same as all the other boys. There was a stigma at being a Merkland boy and we felt very different from the

rest of the pupils. I never got bullied, if there was trouble I would get stuck in as I had no fear. I did see other boys being picked out, just because they were Merkland boys.

#### *Healthcare*

46. I can recall that there was a health centre in Moffat, and I think that the only time that I went there was because I had sickness and diarrhoea. I do not recall seeing a doctor for any injuries that I sustained from the abuse that I suffered.

#### *Religious instruction*

47. We used to be marched to an Episcopalian Church in Moffat. The service was conducted by a Reverend Pont who we were told was a survivor from the sinking of the Titanic. The service was conducted for between thirty and forty minutes all in Latin.

#### *Work*

48. We all had to dig the garden or cut plants in the morning before breakfast and school. I saw one young lad purposely put the fork through his foot just to get him out of doing the gardening.
49. After tea of an evening we all had chores to do. These chores were always supervised and they were allocated by rota which changed after two or three weeks. The chores would be someone clearing dishes and someone washing them and placing them into an immerser thing. You would have to sweep and clean the floors. Someone would have to sort the laundry ready for washing. Another boy would have to clean and polish all the shoes. There were very little jobs done by the staff, it was all done by the children. I tended to be left alone to clear the dining room on a regular basis.

### *Christmas and Birthdays*

50. At Christmas there would be no decorations or special meal or party. I do however remember receiving a token gift. I have no memory of celebrating my birthday at any of the places, my birthday as far as I knew, didn't exist.

### *Visitors*

51. Mrs Marriott, my social worker, would visit me at the home, but I cannot recall how regularly these visits took place. Some of the kids really liked seeing their social workers and they believed they were there to help them. I hated seeing mine, she talked to me awfully and she didn't believe what I was saying to her.

### *Siblings*

52. My siblings and I were kept very separate at Merkland, and we couldn't even go to the pictures together. It was if they were strangers.

### *Family contact*

53. My mum and dad would visit at different times but this was very infrequent. When my dad visited he would again take us to the pub. I eventually made it clear that I didn't want to see him.

### *Discipline*

54. There was no formal explanation given of the discipline within Merkland, in fact there was no formal meeting when I arrived there. The belt or tawse was administered for being late or not carrying out our chores to the required standard. We would also lose privileges like our pocket money for not preparing a perfect bed or being prevented from going out on a Saturday. The regime was all very military.

*Bed Wetting*

55. Some of the children would wet the bed, but no one would be punished for doing so.

**Abuse at Merkland Children's Home Moffat**

56. The belt or tawse was administered by RGE for things like being late with the rolls, being outside the confines of the homes grounds or for your shoes not being of the standard required.
57. If you needed to be disciplined you would have to go into his office at the front of Merkland and he would strike you between six to twelve times across your held out hands. I would stand a little further back to avoid the tawse striking my wrist. RGE was very disciplined, strict and decent in how he administered the punishment. I saw marks on other children's wrists and arms where they must have been standing too close.
58. RGE would always administer the punishment. If he was away and you had been reported for doing something wrong, he would come in the next day and call you out to go with him to the office. If you had been reported twice or more the punishment would reflect the number of times you had been reported.
59. RGD replaced Mr RGE when [REDACTED], and he and his wife, [REDACTED] lived on the second floor. Mr RGD however was very different to Mr RGE. RGD would be a very imposing figure and he always wore the full highland regalia, he looked like the man on the Porridge Oats advert.
60. RGD would take you into the office and lay into you with a rage about him. RGD would go a different colour in his rage, he looked like he was about to have a heart attack. RGD repeatedly gave me the belt, it must have been obvious to the staff that physical abuse was going on. You were only ever in the office to get the belt or get your pocket money. I thought he was psychologically deranged.

61. Mr RGD really detested me, I don't know what he did to the other children but he used to regularly kick the shit out of me.
62. RGD used to enter the dining room when I was alone on clearing up duty. I would hear RGD closing the door behind him and he would cough. He would then command me to sit on a chair with my back facing him and he said that he would be back. I would then hear him throwing sugar on the floor and then I would hear the "crunch crunch crunch" of his brogues moving across the sugar. As he got to me he would grab me by the hair and proceed to punch me and kick me around the body, and as he was doing so he was cursing me by calling me "scum and a wee bastard". I would have to sweep up the sugar afterwards. RGD would then just say that he was going to get rid of me and he would tell me to get out. This same scenario would be repeated at least three times a week for the remaining three years of my stay. I never told anyone as I knew that I wouldn't have been believed. People must have known because I came out in floods of tears and people would have heard because they would have been close by. At any rate my hair would have been ruffled, and sometimes I would have blood coming from my nose or I would have a thick ear.
63. RGD broke my nose and it's never been right since. I never received treatment for it.
64. RGD used to hit me with his hands or kick me with his brogues whenever he found me on my own. After a few months I used to try and evade his attentions. I would regularly answer him back, but his assaults would inflict bruises all over my body.
65. On one occasion after a few months of abuse I thought I would go to school early. I left the dining room and went to the back door through the boot room. Outside of the back door there was a recess which was down from the window and it was lower than the ground. There was a hand rail which I climbed up upon with my hands on the wall and my feet on the rail and I would climb up it until I was able to jump down. It was really high and I couldn't be seen by anyone and I would go off to school. I did it to avoid RGD whenever I could get away with it.

66. [RGD], half way into his stay at Merkland, started to touch me in a sexual way on my private parts with his hands, he did this in the dining room when we were alone. When the sexual abuse started I went wild and tried to punch him, this was the first time that I had retaliated. The sexual abuse would be as regular as up to three times a week and it would start in the same way.
67. I would be in the dining room and I would hear the door open and the sugar being thrown on the floor. I would hear the "crunch, crunch, crunch" of [RGD]'s brogues on the sugar and he would then proceed to hit me on the back of the head and then to sexually and physically abuse me.
68. After I had refused to go to Wellington School, [RGD] became so enraged that he appeared to be crying, and he set about me in the same manner punching and kicking me around the head and body, when he slapped me around the head I would go down and try and crawl away all the while he was kicking me. Within two months [RGD] got me out of Merkland.

### **Reporting of abuse**

69. I eventually told Mrs Marriott after about a month that Mr [RGD] was battering me. I told her on at least three occasions. I also told Mrs Marriott that [RGD] was sexually abusing me. I felt that I was a problem that she didn't want to know. Mrs Marriott dismissed my complaints as being stupid and she generally showed no interest and I think she detested me. Furthermore I became aware that Mrs Marriott had told [RGD] about my allegations as he became more intimidating and he threatened me with worse violence if I said anything. I never discussed the abuse with my fellow pupils and I couldn't tell my teachers as I felt that I wouldn't be believed. I felt that Mrs Marriott and [RGD] were in cahoots with each other.
70. As a direct result of me complaining to Mrs Marriott, both her and [RGD] engineered a move for me to Wellington Approved School in Edinburgh, this was in 1975.

71. Mrs Marriott drove me to the Wellington Approved school, and there was no conversation during the journey. On arriving at the school I was shown around and I totally refused to remain there. I was totally fearless because of all the hidings I was getting. Mrs Marriott was extremely upset and was left with little choice but to return me to Merkland.

#### **Leaving Merkland Children's Home, Moffat.**

72. Eventually RGD got his wish and got rid of me from Merkland. It was arranged between RGD and Mrs Marriott for me to move out of Merkland to live in a hostel in Magdala Crescent, Edinburgh, I was fifteen years old. I was taken in a car and just bundled out and dumped into a hostel in Magdala Crescent, I thought about running but just accepted that it must be better than Merkland.

#### **Hostel in Magdala Crescent, Haymarket, Edinburgh**

73. I think the hostel was nine or eleven Magdala Terrace which was a large sandstone building near to the deaf school. The hostel contained about fifteen working men. I was the only youngster there and I didn't know anyone and I had my own room. The hostel was run by a man called Brian whose face I would only see through a hatch at breakfast time and tea time. Brian would give me pocket money on a Saturday of about three pounds, and that was all the money that I had.
74. My room was basic it just had a bed and a cabinet. There was a communal area for bathing.
75. The other men in the hostel looked out for me, but there was no care or welfare for me. The guys would ask me to go to the shops for them and I used to run around after them.

76. I was meant to attend Boroughmuir school but I went there once and walked out straight away. Nobody cared about me, the only possessions that I had was a bag, a pair of shoes, trousers and a T shirt. I used to wash my underwear in the sink. This was a massive shock to me being in a city after I had been in homes where I was told what to do and where to be at all times.
77. I was at Magdala Crescent for a year and I spent my days walking the streets, visiting museums and watching cases in the High Court. I didn't see anyone. I saw Mrs Marriott once when she appeared with a bag of clothes after I had got caught by the police stealing trousers. I was desperate I had nothing. The police did enquire with Brian as to who looked after me, but Brian just responded by saying that I lived there. That was accepted and no further questions were asked.
78. I would often hitch back to Dumfries to stay with my pal, and I would hitch back to Edinburgh on the Sunday. I didn't know what to do, I couldn't understand why I was in the hostel. I stayed at the hostel for a year, and I had no contact with my parents or siblings.
79. At some point I returned to Merkland to stay for a weekend prior to being enrolled onto a government work scheme at the Barony Agricultural College where I did hedging and things like that. I was sixteen years old and I briefly resided with an old lady in a bed and breakfast for about two weeks in Moffat which was fine.

### **Leaving Magdala Crescent**

80. I can recall that a social worker from Dumfries called <sup>PLS</sup> [REDACTED] arrived at the old ladies house in Moffat and I was told that I was going to stay with a family in Beattock who were going to look after me. I don't know how [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were selected to look after me, but I don't think it was pre-planned. If anything I think I was going to go to somewhere in Dumfries but I ended up with them.

█ and █, █ Beattock.

81. █ and █ were fantastic, they were lovely folk and they treated me like a son. I owe them my life. I remember seeing █ for the first time. He was a wee man covered in oil wearing a boiler suit, and he asked me if I was going to live with them and I said yes. █ and █ were just ordinary caring people. █ had a garage and he immediately made me feel at ease by saying that he was there for me and that he would get me a job and a bank account. I struggled to cope with the kindness which was expressed to me.
82. █ and █ had two sons █ aged seven and █ aged four and when they first met me they greeted me like I was their brother.
83. Within six weeks █ had secured me a job working on a pipe line as a banks man, he also helped me to obtain a bank account. █ and █ took me to Dumfries after I had been working for two weeks, and I was taken to a clothes shop and told to pick anything that I wanted. I just couldn't cope with their kindness and I wasn't used to choosing anything for myself and they had to do it for me.
84. I did rebel at first because I couldn't cope with their kindness, but █ guided me in work and offered to pay me at weekends in his garage. I did strange things and was very secretive which related to my experiences in care. █ and █ understood this and just kept reassuring me that they were there for me and they treated me like their son.
85. █ and █ gave me life skills that I didn't have and they taught me how to look after myself and they gave me proper morals. █ would ensure that my clothes were clean and tidy for my next day's work. They were my parents that I never had. I lived with █ and █ for three years before leaving to take up a job at a hospital in Dumfries.

86. My relationship with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] continued after I left them. I told [REDACTED] before he died that I owed him everything, they gave me the love that I never had before.

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

87. After being in care I got a flat in Dumfries and I worked in a hospital in Dumfries for about five years. I then got a job in a concrete plant, and I have also worked as a sales manager and received regular promotions. I was a sales rep for ten years, and then three years ago I identified that I needed a lifestyle change as things weren't great, and I now work as a scaffolder. I have been married to my wife for about eight years and we have been together for twenty years.
88. I have never told my wife about the abuse that I suffered in care and I don't want her to know. I don't know whether it's because I feel embarrassed but I just don't know how to explain it to her, there are only two people who know that I was brought up by the council. If anyone ever asked me where I grew up I would just say Moffat with my parents.

### **Impact**

89. I don't sleep very well and I get nightmares about being abused by [REDACTED], and have to sleep alone. About six weeks ago my wife found me sleep walking. The sleep walking started when I went to Merkland and I haven't sleep walked since my time there.
90. I can't cope with being happy and I have a massive feeling of guilt when I start feeling happy. I believe that I don't deserve to have a house, a car or to go on holidays. I feel that I am a scum bag. When I played the football coupon I would be desperate not to win it, because I felt undeserving. I really struggle to cope with being happy.
91. I have dreams about always being left out, feelings of recurring disappointment. I dream about turning up to things and I have missed them.

92. I struggle to make my own decisions in my personal life, such as picking things from a menu or buying my clothes. My wife does this for me and she gets frustrated because I can't make decisions. I have successfully made decisions for others in my career, but I can't for myself. I believe this is because my life was so regimented in care.
93. I do not do emotion. I detest cruelty to humans and animals and I go into a bit of a rage if things seem unjust.
94. Prior to residing with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] the only time that I have really been praised was in PE and art at high school. I was an outstanding football player but I never had an opportunity to develop my skills further.
95. I recently sub consciously reeled off a phrase Latin this was as a result of me regularly attending church at Merkland and having to recite Latin.
96. I missed out on a proper education, my maths was remarkable and I wasn't given the opportunity to develop those skills. I have no school qualifications and would have loved to have gone to university.
97. Secondary Institutions - to be published later  
[REDACTED]
98. I feel that my life has been a waste and I wasn't given the opportunity to have a proper family. My relationship with my siblings never existed and I have had no real experience of a real home life.
99. I have never had children of my own and my wife said that I would have been a great father. I just couldn't as I was too scared to have children of my own.
100. Anyone who says that they have moved on from being abused in care is lying. It is with me all the time.

### **Treatment/support**

101. I have never sought treatment and I am not likely to. The first people that I have disclosed my abuse to is the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry. I have wanted to speak to someone, but before I actually get there I change my mind.

### **Lessons to be Learned**

102. You cannot care for children in the way I was treated. No one ever listened to you, there was no praise and it was a very negative experience. They only appeared to be interested in the things you did wrong.
103. If I was in charge I would check the children's welfare at all times and I would believe what the children were telling me. Children need explanations as to what is going on in their lives, nothing was ever explained to me.
104. There should be someone independent in place to support the children and staff need suitable vetting.
105. Sibling relationships need to be nurtured in care, and siblings shouldn't be separated. If we had been kept together my sibling relationships would be better now.
106. I would like to see the Inquiry moves things forward and to remove the stigma from children in homes. I pray that these things aren't going on now.
107. I am very happy that the Inquiry is in place.

**Other information**

108. I have rarely seen my sister and I have never seen my older brother since leaving care. I see my younger brother every six months. My mother lives in Derby and I see her occasionally. I have tried unsuccessfully over the years to find [RGD] to confront him over my abuse. I have never told anyone about my abuse, and when I saw the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry on the television I knew that I had to tell somebody about it.

109. 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... [PTM] .....

Dated... 8/9/2020 .....