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HIA REF: 185

Witness Name: James Miller

**THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF JAMES MILLER**

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I, James Miller will say as follows:-

**Personal details**

1. I was born on [REDACTED] Manchester, England.
2. My father is [REDACTED] and my mother is from [REDACTED]. They met in [REDACTED] and married in 1960. When I was four years old my parents split up. At the time my mother told me my father had died but that was not true. I think he went back to [REDACTED] for a while.
3. My mother told me I was an only child but this turned out to be untrue. I have a younger sister [REDACTED] and a brother [REDACTED] who I only found out about in February 2013. My sister [REDACTED] put a personal ad in the Belfast Telegraph looking for me. She and my extended family in [REDACTED] were trying to trace me through a genealogy service in England. I replied to the ad and was put in contact with my sister.
4. My mother was a nurse which was a pretty good job in those days. I lived with her for the first four years of my life. We moved about a lot. My relatives have since told me that when I was four, my mother decided she couldn't look after me anymore so I was put into Barnardo's in Ballycastle.

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**Dr Barnardo's, The Manor House, Ballycastle (1966 – 1969/70 approximately)**

5. I was placed in Barnardo's in Ballycastle when I was four because my mother was unable to look after me. She had mental health difficulties and she drank a lot. My aunt [REDACTED] was my legal guardian.
6. Barnardo's was a big house with large grounds and peacocks running around. I have no complaints about my time in Barnardo's. The food and clothing was good and I liked it there. I didn't want to leave. There was an old couple who used to come up on a Saturday in an old model T Ford and bring us out on excursions for the day.
7. I attended five different primary schools during my childhood – Ballycastle, Ballyholme, Bloomfield, Tullycarnet and Holywood.
8. I stayed in Barnardo's until I was seven or eight years old when my mother decided she wanted to take me out. We lived in [REDACTED] outside Bangor. She couldn't really look after me though and she often left me home alone to go out drinking. I stayed with my maternal grandmother at weekends. My grandmother was a lovely lady. I think she had some sort of wardship over me but I'm not sure of the details.

**Kincora Boys' Hostel, Belfast (1976 – 1978 approximately)**

9. I went into Kincora when I was about thirteen or fourteen. I am not sure of the exact dates but I was in there for two years and left when I was sixteen. I know I was there until sixteen because I got my first National Insurance Card while I was there. I have kept it ever since; I still carry it in my wallet. I was the youngest boy in Kincora – you were meant to be fifteen to get in. It was supposed to be for working boys but I wasn't of working age. I was still going to school. I used to get the bus from outside Kincora to Dundonald Boys' High School.

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10. I am not sure why I ended up in Kincora. I think it was just because of the circumstances. There was nowhere else to put me. I still remember the name of the social worker who brought me there; Colin Wilmont. My mother brought me to Dundonald Police Station because she couldn't look after me. Colin Wilmont picked me up from there and drove me to Kincora.
11. The three men in charge of Kincora were called Joseph Mains, William McGrath and Raymond Semple. I don't remember the names of any of the ancillary staff. I think there was about seven or eight staff in total but those three were the main wardens. Mains was the top boy. He was the boss and you had to do what he said.
12. On the face of it Kincora looked like a normal place. It had a nice layout and good food. On the surface everything looked good but it was anything but good. As you went in the front door of Kincora, there was a big dining room on the right and a TV room on the left. Directly behind that was an extension and that's where Joseph Mains operated from. His office was on the left and there were showers on the right. Then there was the kitchen and a hall that ran back to another extension where they kept the freezers and stuff like that. Upstairs there were two big bedrooms at the front. They were shared bedrooms; you didn't have your own room. Then there were another two shared bedrooms and a bathroom on either side. There were no more than four boys to a room; there were only ever about twelve boys in Kincora at any one time.
13. The main instigator of abuse was William McGrath. He is dead now. I think the other two are still alive. The abuse started off with what we would now call grooming but at the time I didn't know what it was. McGrath would do simple things like tuck me into bed and get into bed beside me. He was playing daddy and looking back it was a bit twisted but at the time I just thought it was the norm. When you were having a bath, McGrath would come in and dry you off. He wasn't the only one who did this; all three of them did. I remember Mains would dry himself off in front of you completely naked. It got a lot worse than that. It got to the point where McGrath was sexually touching me.

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14. The sexual abuse started within the first week. It continued over the entire two years I was there. I have thought about it and I would say McGrath abused me on 325 occasions, ranging from getting in to bed with me to buggery. He used to bring me downstairs behind Mains' office and down to where the freezers were. It was quieter for him down there. The things he used to do to me were sick. He would try to get me to have an erection but I wasn't old enough. I wasn't even developed which was the way McGrath preferred it. He used to say he liked boys with no hair between the legs.
15. He would make me masturbate him; he thought there was nothing wrong with it. I don't recall him ever forcing me to give him oral sex. He definitely bugged me on more than one occasion. I remember once I was bleeding from the anus for a week after one of his attacks. McGrath was sick. There was definitely something wrong with his head. He used to bring religion into it all the time as well. He would say things like "oh, it's alright" and quote the Bible. He was very powerful within his domain. He was the master and you had to do what he said.
16. The abuse happened both during the day and at night. McGrath was very clever; he did it when nobody else was around, when he was the only one on duty. During the day there might have been two people on duty but at night there was only ever one. The wardens didn't live in the home but McGrath only lived 100 yards down the road. It defies belief that he was a happily married man with a family.
17. I don't recall any physical abuse from McGrath or the other wardens in Kincora; it was all sexual and emotional abuse. The place operated on a system of fear. As soon as you walked in the door you just got a feeling. McGrath used to say things like "your family don't care, that's why you're in here, we look after you and we love you". He would say "when you grow up and leave what will I do without you?"

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18. Joseph Mains used to drive to Bangor a lot to visit his mother. He would bring me with him sometimes and he thought nothing of touching me up. He would put his hand on my leg and then move it up towards my groin. Even though he didn't actually assault me I was terrified he would. He used to say "if you do as I say, we'll get you an ice-cream in Crawfordsburn". McGrath was definitely the worst one without a shadow of a doubt. Semple never assaulted me in any fashion. He was bigger than the other two; he was about 6'5" and wore size 13 shoes. He didn't have a high IQ and he was led by Mains who was the boss and told him what to do.
19. I believe all three of them were homosexuals but McGrath had another agenda. He was involved in a political organisation called TARA. He used to tell me about it. It was an extremist loyalist organisation and he would make veiled threats about how powerful he was and his contacts. I remember important people visiting Kincora like Lord Fitt and Ian Paisley. I don't think they were involved in the abuse or even knew it was going on.
20. You got to know the signals in there. When Joseph Mains' venetian blinds were closed you knew he was in the office with one of the boys and he would be banging away at them. You could hear it; it was awful. It was well known within the home that Mains had his little favourites and I wasn't one of them which I was grateful for. He would bring you into his office to talk about life generally and how you were getting on at school. I had a few of those conversations with him but he didn't actually assault me. I think they each had their favourites and they kept those boys for themselves. However, McGrath wasn't that fussy about who he abused. He said himself he "liked" all the boys as long as they weren't too old.
21. There was nowhere to escape to. You could run away but they would just come and get you. I remember other boys running away and the police would bring them back. I used to think the police were in on it because they were just another part of the establishment. There was a shop directly across the street and I would go over and spend hours talking to the guy who worked there. McGrath and Mains used to give me money. We all got pocket money

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but they gave me extra. The guy in the shop was a really nice man and I'm not sure whether he knew what was going on in Kincora but I always got the impression he did. I mentioned it a few times. People from the area must have known what was going on; even the dogs on the streets knew.

22. When you told people what was going on they wouldn't believe you. They would say people in care and control don't do that sort of thing but unfortunately they do. I mentioned it to my [REDACTED] teacher at school once. He was called [REDACTED] and he was a very nice guy but I don't think he understood. He probably just thought I was telling lies and that it couldn't have been happening. My social worker **KIN 335** used to visit me and I told him what was going on but he didn't believe me either. Looking back, he was part of the establishment as well and probably just couldn't believe it was happening.

23. I don't think the other staff knew about the abuse. There was a lady who cooked the food and she was lovely. There's a strong chance they didn't know because the three wardens kept us well under wraps. They were clever and manipulative. Their timing was always impeccable; it was like a well-orchestrated stage play. They were experts. McGrath especially was a really shrewd guy. From the outside you wouldn't know what he was like. He's the sort of person you could put in a crowd of 100 people and he wouldn't stand out. There was nothing to suggest he was doing the kinds of things he was doing and had been doing for years, as I found out later.

24. Even amongst the boys, we didn't really talk about what was going on. When you first went in, there might be an offhand comment and you wouldn't know what it meant but you soon found out. When we were eating, McGrath would sit in the kitchen and look out over his glasses as if to make sure there was no conversation going on that shouldn't have been. They had the perfect environment in there. We were small and weak and the perfect bait for them.

25. I used to go to Knock Presbyterian Church on a Sunday. That was how you got out of the home and I would stay there all day and go to the youth club at

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night. It was called Epoch. I remember telling a couple of the youth leaders what was happening in Kincora but it just went in one ear and out the other. McGrath never threatened me not to tell about the abuse but it was inferred. He would say things like "nobody is going to believe you, I'm a good Christian man, I believe in the Bible from cover to cover". He could quote you any Scripture you could mention; he was a clever man.

26. My mother used to come visit me every now and again. She was supposed to come once a month but she rarely did. The visits were always supervised by one of the wardens so you couldn't say anything out of turn. We would get the train up to Portrush and she would buy me orange juice and a wagon wheel. She did care a bit. It probably took up all her allowance to come visit me. Her sister [REDACTED] used to come visit me the odd time too.

27. The food and clothes in Kincora were good. It was fine from that point of view. I don't ever recall my birthday or special occasions like Christmas being celebrated in the home. I feel the education I received was good enough. I got 5 O-Levels including an 'A' in English. I enjoyed school – it was better than Kincora.

28. I left Kincora when I was sixteen. I joined the Army to get out of there; it was my get out of jail free card and it worked well. Someone had to sign for me to join because I was underage so my grandmother did.

**Life after care:**

29. I stayed in the Army for just over a year. I left five days before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday because if you stayed on after eighteen you had to pay a fortune to leave. I got on quite well in the Army. I was a Junior Private to start with and I was based in Uniacke Barracks in Harrogate. I was then transferred to the Junior Leader Regiment in the Sir John Moore Barracks in Shorncliffe, Kent. The Army was good and bad; it was quite racist and being from Ireland didn't help. There were four of us from Northern Ireland and they used to say we were

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brought up being taught to throw bricks at soldiers and we were only going over to the Army to perfect our skills.

30. After the Army I came back to Northern Ireland and worked in various jobs. I was a chef for a time and did landscape gardening for a while. I used to run my own motorcycle business but I have been unemployed since July 2013 and I am now moving to Canada to start a new life over there.

31. What happened in Kincora had a huge effect on me. I'm a loner. I'm not a very social person and I prefer my own company. I could never hold down a relationship and I never married or had a family even though I wanted one. It's too late for me now. I'm not homosexual but I've never had a sexual relationship with a woman. In my mind I'm still a virgin because I don't count the abuse as sex. I went to see a counsellor for some years in Dunmurry and she told me I was sexually burnt out as a result of what happened to me. I still like to look at women but I have no sex drive whatsoever. One of the repercussions of Kincora was that I felt I could never have a family which is very sad. I also suffer from psoriasis which I believe is a fallout from Kincora.

32. You never forget the abuse. I am 52 now and I remember it every day. I remember things I don't want to remember. It never leaves you; it's always in your mind. These were people who were meant to be looking after me so it was quite tragic. None of my family know about the abuse except my sister [REDACTED] I only met her last year but she is really nice. She lives in [REDACTED] and is married with two children. I never told my parents about the abuse. They both have dementia now. I met my father last year through my sister and I've been out to visit him in [REDACTED] a few times since.

33. I met Joseph Mains in Lisburn about ten years ago. It was a total shock. We were both on the same side of the street and even after thirty years I recognised him instantly and he recognised me. He walked to the other side of the street and it was intense for me. Whenever Kincora crops up in the news, it brings it all back for me. There were a few stories about Kincora in the Sunday Life a few years ago but they weren't accurate at all so I rang up



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the journalist to set the record straight. I met him in a public place and gave him my side of the story. You never forget the impact of what happened; it just sticks in your head.

34. The police came out and interviewed me about Kincora years ago but I didn't tell them a whole lot because it seemed like they didn't want to know. It was as if it was a quick investigation and they wanted to sweep it all under the carpet. I don't really blame the police for that; I can see they were taking their orders from above. One policeman even said to me "I'm just doing my job". I wasn't called to the trial of Mains, McGrath and Semple; the police said I wasn't needed.

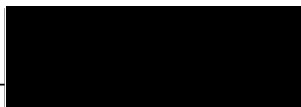
35. I never got any compensation out of Kincora and I'm not sure I would even want to. How can you put a price on a life destroyed? For me, it's not about the money, it's about bringing these people to book and the problem is you can't bring McGrath to book because he's dead. I'm sorry he's dead in a way. I would like to have met him one last time. I wouldn't necessarily say I was going to kill him; I would just ask him one question – why. He probably couldn't answer anyway. People like him are very emotionally detached.

36. I came to the Inquiry in the hope that it will improve things for children in a similar situation today. I have two nephews and I would hope that if somehow they ended up in the care system, the standard of care would be a lot higher. With all the checks and balances nowadays I would hope people wouldn't get away with what McGrath and the others did in Kincora.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_



Dated 06-05-14