

HIA INQUIRY RESTRICTED

HIA REF: 409

Witness Name: Ronald Graham

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF RONALD GRAHAM

I, Ronald Graham, will say as follows:-

Personal Details

1. I was born on [REDACTED]. My parents were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] Graham and I was the 2nd eldest of seven children. I came from a broken home. My mother was physically abused by my father and she would come and go from the family home. I also suffered physical abuse at the hands of my father. My mother and father separated when I was around 10 years old.
2. I was always covered in bruises from the beatings I received from my father. I recall that my primary school teacher noticed the marks on my body and the Social Workers were called in. They had to watch me for about six weeks but nothing changed at home.
3. On one occasion, I took a day off school and my father found out. He beat me black and blue with his fists. Afterwards, I was left in the corner of the sitting room. I was in intensive care for six weeks as a result of this beating. At this point the Welfare stepped in and I was taken into care.

Bawnmore Boys' Home (October 1971 – 18th January 1974)

4. I was 13 years of age when I was placed in Bawnmore Boys' Home. I enjoyed my time there. I had clean clothes and food and I was taught good personal hygiene. It felt like I was in a luxury home.

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5. I also developed a good relationship with [REDACTED] BM 2 and [REDACTED] BM 3 who were the Home seniors at that time. [REDACTED] BM 3 was a lovely man and I got to know him and his family well during the years I was in Bawnmore.
6. There were certainly some thugs and bullies in Bawnmore when I was there but I found it a relief compared to my home life. I was not abused during my time at the Home and I did not see any abuse taking place.
7. When I left Bawnmore Boys' Home I returned to my family home however my father took ill and died from a brain haemorrhage on 10th December 1974.

Kincora Boys' Hostel (2nd December 1974 – 4th January 1975, 10th January 1975 – 11th January 1975 and 13th February 1975 – 10th June 1975)

8. I was placed in Kincora Boys' Hostel on the Newtownards Road on 2nd December 1974. I stayed there until 4th January 1975 when I was transferred to Rathgael. I was then sent back to Kincora on 10th January 1975 however I was fostered out on 11th January 1975.
9. Unfortunately the foster arrangement did not work out and I was sent back to Kincora on 12th February 1975 until 10th June 1975.
10. During this time I shared a room with [REDACTED] R 10, [REDACTED] KIN 344 and [REDACTED] R 17 [REDACTED]. I would go for walks during the day and mostly I went to see [REDACTED] BM 3 who had been in charge of Bawnmore Boys' Home. At nights I stayed in and watched TV.
11. Mr Joe Mains was the warden at Kincora. Mr Raymond Semple was an assistant warden and Mr William McGrath worked as a housemaster at that time.
12. William McGrath initially came across as a caring, gentle and sympathetic man. He would often pat me on the head and ask me how I was doing but things quickly changed.

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13. The first sexual assault by William McGrath took place around the beginning of March 1975. I was having a bath and the bathroom door was locked. I heard someone trying to open the door and a man's voice asked who was in the bath. I said "It's Ronnie, who's that?" The man said "It's Mr McGrath and I want to get something".
14. I told him to wait and I heard him walking away. I remember getting out of the bath and putting a towel around me. I went out of the bathroom and into my room. When I went into the room Mr McGrath was sitting on one of the boys beds. I asked him to leave as I wanted to get changed. Mr McGrath said "No, I've a job to do".
15. I got my clothes and went out of the bedroom. I walked towards the bathroom and Mr McGrath walked behind me. He followed me into the bathroom and closed the door over slightly. I still had the towel around me and I walked over and sat on the toilet. I was still holding my clothes.
16. Mr McGrath walked towards me and I could see that his trouser zip was open. I set my clothes down beside the toilet and when I looked up he had taken his penis out and was holding it in his hand. He said "I'm going to stick this up you". I was scared and I said that I was going to tell Mr Mains.
17. Mr McGrath said that Mr Mains would not listen to me and that he would hit me if I didn't cooperate with him. He told me to turn around and hold onto the toilet. I turned around and he said "open your legs". He pulled the towel off me and anally raped me. I kept telling him to stop but he wouldn't. The rape lasted about 5 or 10 minutes. When he stopped he told me to keep quiet about it.
18. I felt physically sick and I was sore. I was crying the whole time. I wiped myself with toilet paper and I remember I was bleeding.

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19. When I came out of the bathroom I met another resident on the landing and he told me to stay away from Joseph Mains, Raymond Semple, and William McGrath but it was impossible to avoid them as they worked in the Home. I remember seeing Mr McGrath the following day and he just smiled at me.
20. Although I knew what had happened to me wasn't right I was too afraid to tell anyone about it. I felt ashamed and disgusted.
21. I remember that a Social Worker called to Kincora a few days after I had been raped. Mr McGrath knew that the Social worker was visiting and had warned me not to tell them anything.
22. The meeting with the Social worker took place in the room next door to Mr Main's office. It would have been easy for someone in Mr Main's office to hear what was being said.
23. I cut my wrists after the first sexual assault by Mr McGrath. It was a cry for help but my Social worker didn't read the signs. When the Social worker left, Mr McGrath said "Well, you done the right thing keeping quiet, no one would listen to a boy, a simple boy like you. What goes on here stays here, you remember that".
24. About a week later I was lying on my bed reading a book when Mr McGrath came into the room. He said "I want you to do something". I asked him what and he said "I want to look at your underpants". I asked him why and he said "I just want to see them". I was scared but I took my underpants down.
25. Mr McGrath undone his trouser buttons and took his penis out. He told me to lie face down on the bed and open my legs. I did this and he got onto the bed on top of me and anally raped me. I was crying and biting into the counterpane. I told him it was hurting me. The rape lasted a few minutes and when it was over Mr McGrath forced me to masturbate him. Afterwards, he said "Don't you be saying anything".

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26. When Mr McGrath left the room I went to the toilet and wiped my bum with toilet paper. There was blood in the toilet and on the toilet paper. I saw Mr McGrath at supper time but he didn't say anything to me.
27. About three or four days later, Mr McGrath came into my bedroom again. He said "come on, take your trousers down". I was afraid of him and took my trousers down to my ankles. Mr McGrath pulled them right off. He made me lie face down on the bed and anally raped me.
28. It was hurting and I was crying and screaming into the pillow. The rape lasted about 5 minutes. Mr McGrath then forced me to masturbate him again and he ejaculated over the floor. Afterwards, he warned me not to tell anyone about what had happened. I went to the bathroom and I was bleeding again but not as much as before.
29. Around two days later I was in the toilet when Mr McGrath pushed the door open and walked in. He attempted to masturbate me and told me to turn around. He told me to hold onto the toilet. He made me open my legs and proceeded to anally rape me. I yelled and cried because it was hurting. The rape lasted about 5 minutes.
30. When Mr McGrath stopped he put his arms around my neck. He kissed me on the lips and said "you weren't bad". He warned me to keep quiet and went into the next bathroom. I sat on the toilet and wiped my bum. I was bleeding again and I was very sore.
31. The following morning I was in the TV room. Mr McGrath came in and closed the door behind him. He took his penis out of his trousers and forced me to masturbate him. He ejaculated across the chairs and cleaned it with his hankie. He told me to keep quiet about what had happened.

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32. When he left the room I sat down on a chair and vomited over the floor. Mr McGrath came back into the room and asked me what was wrong. I said I was sick and he told me to get the mop bucket and clean it up.
33. I didn't see Mr McGrath until the following afternoon when he came into my bedroom. He forced me to masturbate him again and ejaculated over my bed. He told me to clean the mess up. He said "you know what will happen if you say anything". I went to the bathroom and got toilet paper and cleaned up the mess. I was sick again and vomited on the bedroom floor.
34. The next morning I was in the bathroom when Mr McGrath came to the door. The door was locked and he asked me to let him in. I said "no" as I knew what he wanted. He said "I'll wait until you come out". I was frightened and I said "I'm coming now". Mr McGrath said "It's just as well as I was going to get some boys". I thought he was referring to the UDA so I opened the door.
35. Mr McGrath pushed me back into the bathroom. He took his penis out of his trousers and forced me to masturbate him. Afterwards, he told me to get out of the bathroom and warned me not to tell anyone. I saw Mr McGrath about the hostel most of the day but he didn't speak to me.
36. I also recall a night when Joseph Mains took 3 or 4 boys including myself to a hotel in Bangor in the Home's minibus. When we arrived outside the hotel he turned around to us and said 'you're going to do what you're told here'.
37. The other boys went into the hotel but I didn't go in. They were in the hotel for about an hour and when they came out they were crying. The other boys did not tell me what had happened.
38. When it was my turn to go into the hotel a police land rover stopped at the opposite side of the road and we were taken back to Kincora.

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39. The final sexual assault by William McGrath happened the day before I was due to leave Kincora. I was packing my clothes as I was leaving to live with foster parents when he came into my bedroom. He said "I heard you're leaving, one more time before you go". I said "No" and McGrath said "If you don't do it this time, I'm going to tell your foster parents what you're like".
40. I asked him what he meant and he said "I'll tell them about the other times". I was frightened and Mr McGrath told me to take down my trousers and get onto the bed. I did as he asked and I was lying face down on the bed. Mr McGrath got up onto the bed on his knees. He told me to open my legs and he put a cream inside my anus. He did this with his finger and then he anally raped me.
41. After he raped me he warned me not to tell anybody about what had happened at Kincora. He then left the room. I started to cry and went to the bathroom. There was blood on my backside and legs and my backside was very sore. I left Kincora the following day. Leaving Kincora was like coming out of Hell and going into Heaven; that was the nightmare over with.
42. **KIN386** and **KIN387** were my Social Workers while I was a resident in Kincora.
43. I was too frightened to tell them about the abuse. I thought that word would get back to William McGrath and that things would only get worse.
44. I did tell **KIN386** a few times that I did not want to stay at Kincora but I didn't tell her why. I might have plucked up with courage and opened up had she taken me out of the building and questioned me more closely about my reasons for not wanting to stay.
45. On one occasion, I remember **KIN386** telling me that I did not know how lucky I was, this being in relation to my circumstances.

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46. I also told [KIN387] that I did not want to stay at Kincora. Again, I did not tell her the reason why however she did not ask me nor did she seem surprised about this.
47. I had been placed in Kincora as my father had died. I was supposed to be in a safe and happy place but I wasn't and I felt that the Social workers should have realised that something was wrong.
48. At that time, Mr McGrath was a well known and respected member of the community. He boasted that he had friends in high places and that he had paramilitary connections. I knew he had a gun as he had placed it in my mouth during one of the last sexual assaults against me.
49. I believed Mr McGrath when he said that no one would listen to me. I thought that I would be abandoned by my family and friends if I reported the sexual assaults and that I would be treated like an outcast by the community. I also feared that I would be hurt or killed if I told anyone.
50. Despite getting away from Kincora I was very troubled as a result of what had happened to me there and the relationship with my foster family broke down.
51. I hadn't seen my mother since my father's funeral and my grandparents were too old to look after me at this time. As a result, I was sent to Rathgael Training School under the terms of a Care and Protection Order. At the Court hearing I told the magistrate that I would rather go to jail than go back to Kincora.

Rathgael Training School (1975-1976)

52. I went to Rathgael when I was seventeen. I enjoyed my time there and I didn't want to leave it. It had a relaxed atmosphere and I felt safe and secure. There were no gates and you could walk in and out if you wanted but the building would be locked at night.

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53. [RG 277] and [RG 278] were the house masters at that time and I stayed in Senior House 3.
54. I only recall one incident in Rathgael when another resident called [REDACTED] made a sexual advance towards me in the shower rooms. I punched him and knocked him unconscious. [RG 277] found out and we were both punished with extra chores the following week.

Life After Care

55. I finally built up the courage to speak out and do something about the abuse I had suffered at Kincora.
56. I went to see the Reverend Ian Paisley and told him about what had happened to me at Kincora. I respected him and believed that he would do something about it but he did nothing. In fact, he denied having ever spoken with me and also denied knowing anything about William McGrath.
57. In the 1980s, I gave evidence at the trial of Joseph Mains, Raymond Semple and William McGrath.
58. A few days before the Court case I was approached by two men in a car and threatened with a gun. One of the men said "You're Graham aren't you? I wouldn't go near the High Court if I was you, we're friends of McGrath and the next time we see you; you will be in a wooden box".
59. They were wearing balaclavas and I remember shaking with fear and wetting myself. After the confrontation I went back to my bedsit and got washed and changed. I couldn't sleep but I was determined to go ahead with the Court case.
60. I reported the incident to the police the following day however they said that I must have imagined it as no cars could get into the area after 7 o'clock.

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61. On first day of the trial I questioned the police about the car again as I was extremely concerned for my safety. Although I was prepared to give evidence at trial I wanted assurances that I would be kept safe.
62. The police admitted that there had been a car in the area however they said that someone must have left it there overnight. I lived in the area at that time however and my understanding was that any vehicles left un-attended would be towed away. The police told me not to worry about it and that I would be safe.
63. At the end of the trial, all three men were convicted of the systematic sexual abuse of children in their care.
64. Although I was able to tell my story and help secure their convictions, I found the police investigation and legal process tough going and I still live with what happened to me at Kincora every day. I don't feel that the other victims and I had our day as we never got an apology.
65. I also gave evidence at the Hughes Inquiry and I received £35,000 compensation as a result of a civil claim but it didn't feel right to have the money. It felt like dirty money and I couldn't wait to get rid of it. I ended up giving away most of it to charities.
66. I got married in 1992 when I was 34 years of age. I have two sons and one daughter aged 20, 21 and 18. I was determined to make sure my children had the life that I never had.
67. Over the years however I have suffered nervous breakdowns and I was diagnosed with bipolar depression 3 years ago.
68. I have attempted suicide on several occasions and I have been in and out of various mental institutions. I have read books written by people who have suffered similar abuse to help me cope but I still haven't been able to put the past behind me and I am currently receiving counselling from Lifeline Counselling Service.

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69. My ill health has had a detrimental effect on my relationship with my family but especially my wife and daughter.
70. I suffered a nervous breakdown shortly after I met with the Acknowledgement Forum in March 2015. I thought that I could handle recounting my experiences of Kincora. I had so much in my head that I wanted to talk about but the meeting had a bigger impact on me than I thought it would. My marriage broke down as a result in May 2015.
71. Despite these difficulties, I still believe that assisting with the Inquiry is the right thing to do. I am still hopeful that it will finally help me to put the past behind me, move on with my life and get some closure.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed 

Dated 18. May 2016