

HIA REF: 211

Witness Name: HIA211

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA211

I, HIA211 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]. I was in a children's home in [REDACTED] from when I was a baby. At some stage I was taken to another children's home in [REDACTED]. I think both homes were run by the Sisters of St Louis. I had no visitors during my time in the homes. I had no siblings. One morning I was in school in Bundoran and I was taken out along with another girl called GSC1 [REDACTED] by the nuns and the welfare and taken by car to the Good Shepherd on the Dungiven Road in Derry. I was never told why I was taken. I was placed in Good Shepherd in Derry from [REDACTED] when I was [REDACTED]. I remained there until [REDACTED] when I was [REDACTED] years old.

Good Shepherd, Derry [REDACTED] (approximately)

2. On my first day I think the nun in charge, SR312 met me and GSC1 [REDACTED] at the front door. SR312 is dead now. We were thrown in the bath and a uniform was put on us. It was a yellow dress. We all wore the same uniform every day. They cut my hair and changed my name. They called me [REDACTED] instead of HIA211. I was known as [REDACTED] all my time in the Good Shepherd. We didn't get anything to eat. They sent us straight to work in the laundry.

3. I did various jobs in the laundry during my time there. One of my jobs was to parley mark the clothes. Two men drove vans around Derry and collected laundry from various places. They brought the laundry to the Good Shepherd in big bags. I would mark the different loads with different coloured stripes, for example a blue stripe to identify where it came from. Then the laundry went to other girls to sort. Then the laundry was washed and tumbled dried and then pressed in a big roller. All the work took place in one big room. There was about four or five girls operating the dry cleaners, four or five operating the five washing machines, two girls operating the two tumble dryers and three on one side and three on the other side of the roller which ironed the laundry. If any of the machines broke down we had to do all the work by hand. There was a workroom above the big machine room where they had to sew the clothes and do the mending. For the first year I just cried and cried. I didn't know where I was and I missed my friends in [REDACTED]
4. There were quite a few girls in Good Shepherd, but it was mostly older people there when I went. I was one of the youngest along with the other girl that I went in with and there were a couple of other young girls. There were two rooms for the girls around my age – a blue room and a pink room. I was in the pink room along with GSC2 [REDACTED] GSC3 [REDACTED] GSC4 [REDACTED] and GSC5 [REDACTED]. The older girls and woman stayed in a dormitory. I moved there when I was older. I don't know what age I was.
5. A woman called GSC6 [REDACTED] was a civilian worker in the Good Shepherd and she used to come round and wake us up at 7am. We were told to get up and go to mass and if we didn't get up she used to write it on a slip of paper and give it to SR312 [REDACTED] to inform her that we didn't get out of our beds. After we got up we went downstairs and went to mass in the chapel on the premises. Mass was at 7.30am. After Mass we got our breakfast about 8am and then went straight to work at about 8.30am. For breakfast we usually got porridge but sometimes I had a slice of bread with a cup of tea instead. It was never enough food and I was hungry. We got a cup of tea at 10am. We got our lunch about 1pm. It was alright but it was tasteless. I think we only ever got meat on

a Sunday. We usually ate vegetables and potatoes. The nuns used to stand over you at the table if you didn't eat your vegetables. I didn't like vegetables but I had to eat them as the nuns would come up behind you and slap you across the face if you didn't. We were never allowed to talk at meal times. After lunch we just went out to the yard and we used to walk up and down. There was nothing else to do. We were not allowed go out to the town or anywhere. We went back to work at 1.30pm and finished around 5pm. The laundry closed at weekends.

6. After work we used to go up to the workroom and watch television for a while. If any kissing came on the television **SR48** who was in charge of packing the clothes for collection in the laundry, blocked it with a newspaper. **SR48** has passed away. We said the Rosary in the workroom and then went down for our evening tea at 6pm. We would maybe get a slice of ham and a slice of a tomato for tea. Later we would watch TV and then we went to bed for 9pm. We were not allowed books. We were not even allowed to talk. **GSC6** supervised us in the dormitory and if we talked in bed she made you stand outside your cubicle. There were four beds in each cubicle and many cubicles in the dormitory.
7. If we did not do our work properly in the laundry and we did not clean our cubicles properly or anything like that the nun or **GSC6** would note down on a slip of paper what you did not do. We called it getting 'black booked'. **SR312** **SR312** noted down the contents of the slips in a black book. On a Sunday we went into a big room and sat down on chairs. **SR312** read out the names of the girls noted in the black book and what they had done wrong. She would call out **SR312** as that is how I was known. We had to stand when our name was read out and then kneel and say sorry. It often happened to me. It was humiliating and I dreaded Sundays.
8. We went to confession with the priest that came to say mass at the Laundry – **GSC7** He told **SR312** what the girls had told him in confession. She made a note of it in her black book and read out the name and

what the girl did on the Sunday. As a result of this girls stopped going to confession.

9. I remember when I went to Good Shepherd at [REDACTED] they were doing an opera and they called it 'The Maid of the Mountain'. The girl who had the principal part was sent to Newry and I got her part. I had to learn the songs and dress up in a sort of a wedding frock. I don't know what happened to the frock. I might have caught it on a nail. It tore at the end and I had to tell **SR312** **SR312** As punishment I had to stand a full week for my meals and eat standing up. This was a common punishment.
10. When I was young one of my jobs in the Good Shepherd was to scrub the refectory floor on my hands and knees along with about seven or eight other young girls. This usually took place on a Friday and it took all day. Usually a nun was supervising us. We weren't allowed to talk.
11. We were never allowed out to dances. When I was older I wanted a proper job and I wanted to do hairdressing. I used to do the older women's hair and it was so good that other girls thought they had been out at a hairdresser. I asked **SR312** if I could go and do hairdressing but she would not let me.
12. I did not know that I was in Derry until I was eighteen or nineteen. Some older women told me. We never got out of the Good Shepherd. We were just slaving from morning to night. When the nuns were away to the convent they locked the big brown door of the home part of the laundry so we could not get out. We never got paid for the work we did in the laundry. It was like a prison.
13. On a Saturday we used to go out and gather potatoes in the fields which belonged to the convent. We used our hands to dig as we had no spades. We were there from 9am to 5pm and we never even got a glass of water or a drink. **SR312** was in charge of us at the time but she did not come up to the fields. I think senior girls supervised us there.

14. We were never taught how to cook, to tell the time or how to use a phone. We were never taught how to handle money. We were never paid for the work we did in the Laundry. We lived and went to work in the Good Shepherd and I never knew any other life. Around 1971 when 'new money' came into force **SR312** made us line up outside her office. She then brought us in and asked us one by one to identify a 1p and 2p coins. I did not know what they were and she slapped me across the face.
15. Once I ran away from Good Shepherd to the chapel in the Waterside. I met **GSC8** and I told him how we were living and he brought me back to Good Shepherd. I think I got punished by being made to stand for my meals. I never ran away again.
16. I remember we did a concert for Bloody Sunday and I had to write the words of the song 'The Bells of St Mary's' down because I had never heard of it. **SR312** slapped me across the face because I did not know the words. I think I was about twenty seven at the time.
17. I remember a girl called **GSC9** getting a job in the kitchen working with **SR49** **GSC9** was in her twenties and did not live in Good Shepherd. They became in charge of the kitchen and **SR49** treated her well and taught her how to cook and how to drive a car. The rest of us were not taught anything and did not receive good treatment. This is an example of how we were discriminated against. **SR49** now lives in a home which was built on the site of the Good Shepherd for the nuns on the Dungiven Road.
18. One day around 1972/3 **SR312** sent for me. I thought I was in trouble. I was about twenty seven years old. She told me that they were allowing me and another girl **GSC10** to go out and live in a flat on trial to see how we would cope living away from Good Shepherd. We still had to go back and work there during the day. Our flat was a ten to fifteen minute walk. We got our meals in Good Shepherd and we were paid very little – about £12 a week. We had to pay all our bills out of it and it was difficult. **GSC10** got a second job in a chip shop to help pay the bills. We liked it as we had freedom. I could never

have asked to leave the laundry. SR312 would not have allowed me. GSC10 has since passed away.

Life after care

19. When the Laundry closed down around [REDACTED] I got a job as a domestic in [REDACTED]. I worked there for [REDACTED] I left [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] I haven't worked since then.
20. When you've been raised in homes all your life you find it very hard to mix with people. I was behind walls in Good Shepherd hidden away. When I left I still hid behind walls. I could not face anybody.
21. When I was in my late thirties I had my first boyfriend – [REDACTED]. He sexually and physically abused me. I went to the Rape Crisis Centre and I reported it to the police. I went to court and got an Order against him. However he kept torturing me and smashed my windows. He was arrested. I moved to the cityside and he has left me alone.
22. I attended the Inquiry meeting in the Everglades Hotel in February and I met some of the other girls who were in the laundry. One of the girls, HIA7 [REDACTED] HIA7 told me about the WAVE centre and I now go to meetings there every Friday morning. I find it helpful. I do voluntary work for the [REDACTED] four days a week in [REDACTED]. A girl I was with in Good Shepherd, GSC12 comes to visit me on a Tuesday every now and again. I am also still in contact with GSC11 and GSC2 [REDACTED] who were with me in Good Shepherd. They both live in England.
23. Along with a few other girls from the children's homes in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I sent forms in to the Redress Board in relation to redress scheme in the south. A doctor from Gransha examined us. I received a cheque for [REDACTED] in compensation in 2007. I used to visit the home in Beechwood which

was built for the girls who were in the laundry when it closed down. A woman who worked there called [REDACTED] pretended to be a friend. I was going through a difficult time with my abusive boyfriend and she came to my aid. I lodged my compensation cheque in my bank account. When I was away on holiday in Bundoran [REDACTED] who had a key to my home came and took my bank book and withdrew the compensation money. I never saw a penny. I reported this to the police in Strand Road and they did not pursue the matter as [REDACTED] denied it. Victim Support is providing assistance to me in relation to this matter.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed [REDACTED] HIA211

Dated 30/7/2013

Entrance to Good Shepherd Convent, Derry



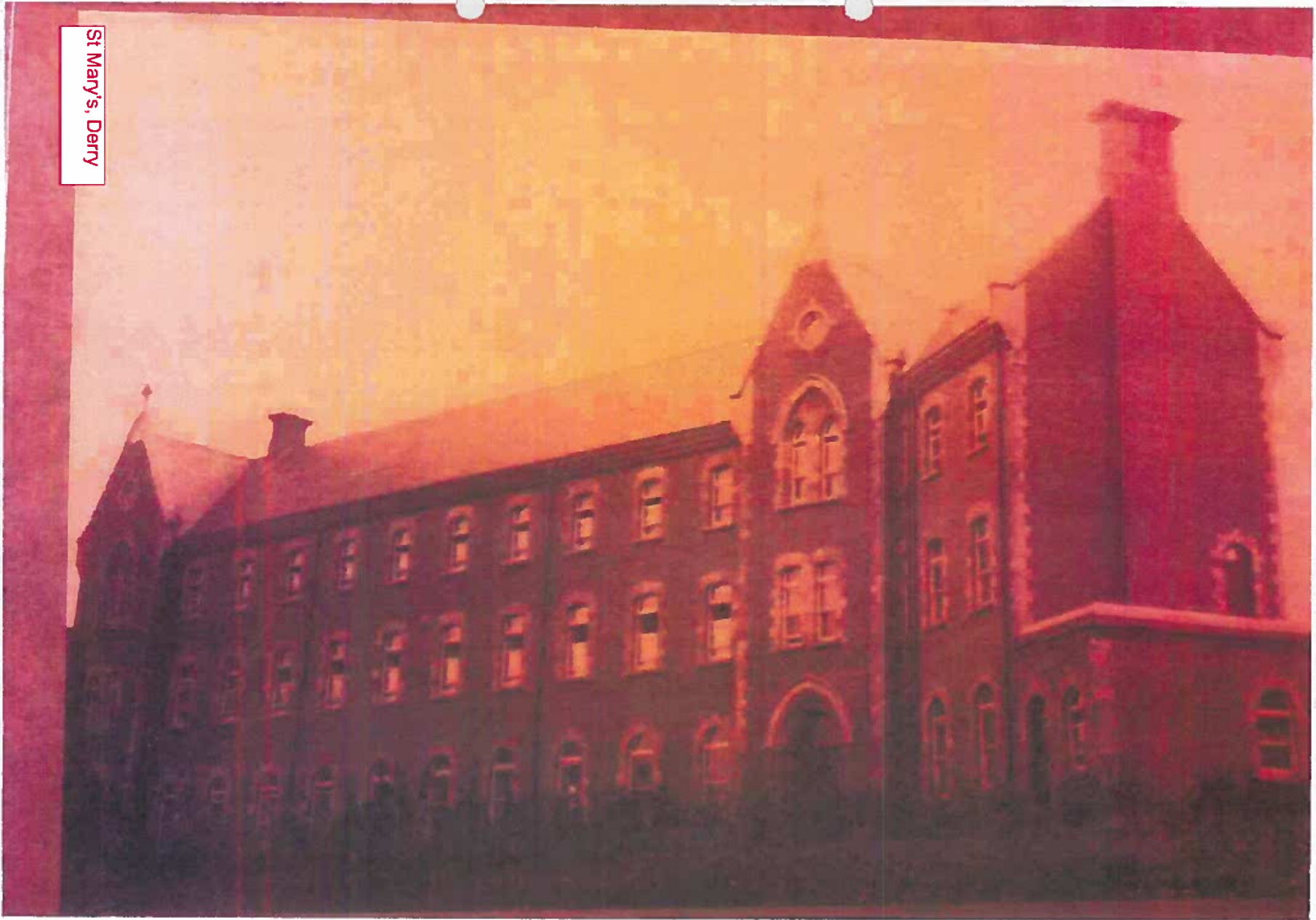
GOOD SHEPHERD CONVENT

FRONT ENTRANCE

Good Shepherd Convent, Derry



St Mary's, Derry



Dining room, St Mary's, Derry



Theatre and stage, St Mary's Derry.

