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HIA REF: 247

Witness Name: HIA 247

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

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 247**

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I, HIA 247 will say as follows:-

**Personal details**

1. I was born on [REDACTED] I lived in Belfast initially and moved to Birmingham when I was about nine or ten years old.
2. I lived with my mother and five siblings in Birmingham until my father said that some of us would have to go back to Belfast. My brother NL 64 my sister [REDACTED] and I volunteered to come back and we went to live with my grandfather in the [REDACTED] My unice [REDACTED] and his wife and children lived with my grandfather at the time and he did not feel there was enough room for us all. I am not really sure who decided to put us in care but a man who I think was called [REDACTED] from Social Services or NSPCC came and told my brother NL 64 and I that we had to go and live in Nazareth Lodge. I was about nine or ten at the time and NL 64 is three years younger than me. My sister [REDACTED] went to live with my paternal aunt.

**Nazareth Lodge (1956/1957 – 15 August 1959)**

3. [REDACTED]

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[Redacted]

4.

[Redacted]

5.

[Redacted]

6.

[Redacted]

7.

[Redacted]

8.

[Redacted]

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9.

**Rubane House, Kircubbin (15 August 1959- 27 August 1960)**

10. I was twelve when they told me I was moving to Rubane House, Kircubbin. I recall they brought **NL 64** to see me once at Rubane House for half a day so we had a chance to see speak to each other on that occasion but other than that we had no contact with each other.
11. Rubane House was a very strict place. I was taught by **BR 17** Some of the other Brothers taught as well but I was always in **BR 17** class. It was very strict and there was no messing around. In the afternoon we were allowed to play outside in the yard, or play in the garden or play Gaelic football or hurling in the big sports fields. We got some freedom at Rubane when we were allowed to walk in to Kircubbin to buy stamps.
12. **BR 17** assaulted me during my stay there. I remember I was caught talking to one of my friends and I was punished by **BR 17** I was taken out of class into an office where he told me to drop my trousers and my underpants and then he beat me across the backside. He grinned at me as he delivered this punishment.
13. At night time we used to watch television at one end of the dining room and **BR 17** told me to sit beside him at the back of the room. It was a big room and it was dark and he started to interfere with me. I was upset and embarrassed and he warned me not to say anything. This happened a number of times.
14. During the night in the dormitory when it was completely dark I was woken up on occasion by people having their hands inside my bed interfering with me.

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It happened during the hours of darkness so you could never see who was doing this to you. I slept in an annex away from the main building. This sexual contact always sticks in my mind. Other boys were also being interfered with but I never reported this abuse to anyone.

15. At breakfast time two boys were always sent to do the tea errand. I remember one day I was sent and **BR 17** was there. I remember my hand slipped on the handle and the tea spilled straight over my legs, burning them badly. The skin on my legs was blistering and coming off. I was rushed into Newtownards Hospital and stayed there for quite a while. I think **BR 15** **BR 15** came to visit me a couple of times in hospital. I can't remember how long I was there but I loved it there and the nurses were great. When I got out I was examined by a doctor in **BR 17** room before I went back to school. Doctors or outsiders never usually came to Rubane House. For a number of years afterwards I got pins and needles in my legs and still have scars on my feet as a result of this incident.

16. I became friendly with **DL523** in Rubane House. We were close because we both loved football. There was another older boy who was from the **DL 32** called **DL 32** who looked out for me when the older boys tried to bully me. I tried to stay away from the older boys. They would often bully the younger boys in the home and give us a hard time. I was also friendly with a boy called **NL287** who had been in Nazareth Lodge with me but we drifted apart a bit after we went to Rubane House.

17. I was an altar boy at Rubane House and I would serve mass every morning. After you served mass, it was breakfast time. For breakfast there was bread and tea and lumpy porridge. You ate it because you were so hungry. I was starving all the time throughout my stay at Rubane House.

18. We were often made to go to the farms and pick potatoes all day long. They used to give us a piece of bread and jam at dinner time with a cup of tea. You did not have to go to school if you were working in the fields. I think we got

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paid a shilling a week. The home got paid 15 shillings a week. I remember saving up mine and buying my first set of football boots.

19. I was thirteen when I left Rubane. I think I stayed with my grandfather for a couple of weeks before I went to Birmingham. I got the boat to Heysham then travelled down to Birmingham. I met my Uncle [REDACTED] there and he took me to see my mother, my brother and my two younger sisters. I remember it was very emotional. I could not stay with my mother however as she lived in a small apartment and they did not have room for me. I stayed with Uncle [REDACTED] initially until my mother got more suitable accommodation and I went to live with her when I was about thirteen or fourteen years old.

### Life after care

20. My brother NL 64 was fostered, he returned home in June 1962 and in later years he came to Birmingham but life in care was harder for NL 64 as he was a little younger and treated badly as a result of his bedwetting. He now lives in a hostel and has poor health. He never married and has never been able to hold down a job. His life has been extremely adversely affected by being in care. He does not feel able to participate in this Inquiry process but that is his decision. The hardest thing for me throughout my time in care was to witness the nuns at Nazareth Lodge being physically abusive to NL 64 and the fact that I always felt powerless to help him.

21. I stayed in Birmingham throughout my adult life. I finished school there, got married and I have now have two children and five grandchildren. I worked for [REDACTED] in a number of different jobs until they closed. I have had a good life and I spoil my grandchildren. I have been with my wife for many years but I never mentioned the sexual or physical abuse I suffered whilst in care to her until I met with the Acknowledgement Forum as part of this Inquiry process. I was just too embarrassed and ashamed to discuss it with my wife or my family.

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Statement of Truth

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

Signed **HIA 247** \_\_\_\_\_

Dated 25/3/2014 \_\_\_\_\_