

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 385

Witness Name: HIA 385

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 385

I, HIA 385 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]. I am from a Traveller family. We lived in a gypsy caravan and my father was always out on his horse and cart buying and selling things.
2. I have a sister [REDACTED] who is three years younger than me and a brother [REDACTED] who is five years younger than me. I also have two half brothers, [REDACTED] and DL 53. I only found out when I was approximately twenty-two years of age that I have a half-sister [REDACTED] whom I was introduced to by my uncle. I also had a younger sister [REDACTED] who died in a fire, on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] when she was only a baby. Our gypsy caravan blew over in the wind and the lit fire spread through the caravan. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. I was two years old at the time.
3. I think we were taken into care because our home life wasn't very stable. [REDACTED] who was aged about four years at the time, was taken to a home in Portrush and [REDACTED] who was aged around six, was also taken to a home, but I'm not sure where.

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De La Salle Boy's Home, Rubane House, Kircubbin (3rd February 1961 – 27th March 1964)

4. I thought that I was taken to Rubane when I was approximately nine years of age, however records suggest that I was admitted on 3rd February 1961 and I remained there until 27th March 1964.
5. BR 15 was a horrible man. He was a [REDACTED], and he always smelled of cigarettes. He used to rule by fear. I didn't want to upset him, as he would make life hard. He used to call me [REDACTED], and say I was from [REDACTED] because of the [REDACTED]. When we were in the television room, he would sit at the front of the room, put a boy on his lap and put his hand on the boy's leg. We were all wearing shorts. He seemed to have his favourite boys for this. I just thought it wasn't right, because there was no need for his hand to be there. He also used to watch the boys in the showers, but he wasn't the only Brother to do this. I remember a [REDACTED] Brother [REDACTED]. I don't believe that they were there just to supervise us. Again I just thought it wasn't right, the way they stood watching us. It made me uncomfortable.
6. There were a few nightwalkers in Rubane, two of whom stick out in my mind. I remember BR 15 and the same [REDACTED] man [REDACTED] who would have watched us in the shower. I would be lying in bed, and would see somebody wandering about the dormitory with a torch, and then sitting on a boy's bed. I would just pull the covers over my head. None of the nightwalkers ever came near me. I never saw any overt sexual activity going on in Rubane, but the other boys spoke of it and we all knew what was going on. I tried not to talk about any of this, as it was better not to know. I think that maybe my scarring might have protected me in some way because BR 15 never came near me or tried to touch me in a sexual manner.
7. A lot of boys wet the bed in Rubane. Whenever they wet the bed, they had to lie in the same damp sheets all night, and the mattress underneath would be soaked. The boys were too frightened to admit that they had wet the bed because of what might happen. Some boys would have to lie in the same

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soiled sheets for a week before they were changed. There was a strong smell of urine in the dormitories from the damp mattresses.

8. Everybody had chores to do in the morning before breakfast. The wooden floors in the posh bit of the house got scuffed because of the shoes worn by the Brothers. We had to sweep the floors and then five or six boys would shuffle arm in arm, cleaning and polishing the floors with rags on our feet. If we weren't polishing the floors, we would have maybe been cleaning toilets, sweeping the dormitories or mopping. We then had to run to get breakfast, but if we were caught running, we wouldn't get any breakfast and we were given a hiding instead. The Brothers always used a cane to punish us and we were hit round the back of the legs.
9. The Brothers had a habit of grabbing us by the ear, if we stepped out of line. If we said anything, they would give us a good hiding with the cane. I remember one young boy was caught smoking and he was stripped right down to his underpants. They bent him over a chair and whipped him. The door was shut and whatever went on behind closed doors, stayed there. It's as simple as that.
10. The food wasn't great. I don't remember eating any nice food. For breakfast we were given lumpy porridge and a slice of bread, with old-fashioned margarine. I remember eating corned beef. It was the same food every day, and we were never given enough. We were always hungry.
11. We used to have to pick potatoes in the fields from very early in the morning. I think we were collected by a tractor or van every morning and taken to the fields. I'm not sure if the farmers paid for us to help or if they gave potatoes to the Brothers. I never saw any money for it. I'll never forget it. I think it was winter time because it was freezing cold, and we were only wearing shorts and wellies that were far too big for us. My hands were blue and my legs were cold. The only way I could warm myself up was to urinate on my hands. I would then be smacked around the ear. One day I was trying to lift the potatoes out with a pitchfork, but my hands were so cold that I couldn't work it

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right and the pitchfork went right through my boot into my foot. He took me to an old shed where the potatoes were stored, and he just washed my foot. I've still got a scar. I used to think to myself "what am I doing here, I'm only a kid, I shouldn't be out here".

12. We had a swimming pool. I never liked the water. I can't swim, and I didn't like to wear shorts because of the scars on my back. **BR 15** insisted that I get into the swimming pool. I was hanging onto the side. I nearly drowned and one of the other boys had to pull me out but **BR 15** didn't care. He thought it was funny. What he said went, it was as simple as that. I am still terrified of water after that incident.
13. My mother died, aged thirty six, whilst I was at Rubane. I don't think I was told straight away. I think I only found out through word of mouth, from other boys in the home who were from around the same area as me. As soon as I found out, I ran away. I only made it about a mile. A man in a van stopped and brought me back to the home. I think he was a workman at Rubane at the time. As soon as he left, I got a really good hiding, instead of them sitting me down and asking me why I did it. Their answer was always the same "he'll only understand if he gets a good hiding, and he'll know not to do it again".
14. I don't remember any visitors when I was in Rubane, save for my father, who I only recall seeing two or three times. He gave me half a crown. Every time I looked at that coin, I thought of my dad. I don't remember any inspections, or the welfare checking on me. Nobody checked up on us.
15. We were never taken out of the home, except for when we had to go potato picking. I don't remember ever seeing a doctor or nurse, even for a bad earache. When I was in care, the Christian Brothers never helped me at all. I used to stutter really bad when I was younger. We couldn't speak to the Brothers because they had no time for us. They would just say "hurry up and say what you're going to say or shut up". As I got older I learned to handle it a bit better, but I never got any help from them.

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16. I never got an education at Rubane. I don't remember even going to class. When I left Rubane I could hardly read or write.
17. I don't remember any good times there. Inside the home, I was just a number. There wasn't any love or care there. I don't remember having a birthday in Rubane. Christmas wasn't a big thing either. We never got toys or anything special to eat.
18. I wouldn't say that all of the Brothers were bad, but the ones that weren't bad, still didn't do anything to help us. Some of them shouldn't be called Christian Brothers. They were supposed to be looking after us. I think I was really let down by the system in general, and the people who were supposed to be protecting us. There was never any help or therapy in Rubane, or even any patience.
19. I left Rubane and went to a little farm. I'm not sure who took me there but I presume it was the welfare. I didn't know what was happening. I wasn't prepared at all. They just told me to get a few clothes together and get in the car because I was going somewhere else to live. In those days we didn't get to ask questions. There was a young son there, who was around the same age as me. I went to school whilst I was there. I was happy in that placement. They were nice people.
20. I was then taken away from the farm and put into a foster placement with Mrs [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] and I went to school in Coleraine. Mrs [REDACTED] had a daughter who was only a month older than me. Mrs [REDACTED] husband was in the Merchant Navy. I think that the men who came off the ships stayed in her house as it was extra money for her. She loved the money.
21. It wasn't a very nice place. I basically went from hell to hell, save for the short time at the farm with the good people. Mrs [REDACTED] used to beat me about like a ball. At the beginning she was all show. Her daughter was always threatening to tell tales to her mum, and she would tell lies about me to get me into trouble. Mrs [REDACTED] used to pull me by the hair. I had a little wallet that I carried

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around in my back pocket, and each time Mrs [REDACTED] pulled my hair out, I would keep the strands in my wallet. I still have the wallet. I told the welfare more than once that Mrs [REDACTED] was beating me. I remember telling a woman and she told me that I mustn't tell lies. I was very rarely left alone with a social worker. Mrs [REDACTED] was always there. I remember that it felt as if the social worker couldn't wait to get out of the door, as if I was just a number, and she'd go on to visit the next child.

22. On one occasion whilst I was living with Mrs [REDACTED] she came out to the back yard to get me and asked me did I want to go fishing. A man, whom I had never seen before but I presumed to be a friend of Mrs [REDACTED] took me away. We were carrying rods. As we walked along, we went in the opposite direction from the harbour, and I asked him where we were going. He said he knew a better place where we would catch more fish and we walked to a secluded rocky area. He took his zip down and made me masturbate him. He then touched me. We never fished. He walked me home and I never saw him again. I couldn't tell Mrs [REDACTED] what happened because she would knock me about or call me a liar.

23. It felt like I was on a roundabout that I couldn't get off, because I couldn't tell anybody what was happening, as I would just be called a liar.

Life After Care

24. I think that I left care after my father remarried and settled in England. [REDACTED] and I left care at the same time and we moved to [REDACTED] to live with him and his new wife [REDACTED]. I believe that [REDACTED] was being looked after by my mother's relatives. My dad was a very hard man. He liked to drink. He used to tell me that he would break my jaw if I stuttered. He has never spoken to me about my childhood, or answered any questions I have about my mother, [REDACTED] or my half-siblings. I was only able to find out the details of the fire that killed [REDACTED] after my wife searched through the records at the local library in Coleraine, so the only information I have about my sister is a newspaper cutting. [REDACTED] was a good woman. When I came over she organised for me to

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get skin grafts for my scars, and she also arranged for me to get assistance for my stammer.

25. I left school when I was fifteen, and I left home when I was sixteen. I was sleeping in phone boxes, old cars, any place I could find. I then got a job, and was able to pay for a room. I've been in the building trade all my life. I've always had trouble with my ears, I think because of the thumps I got on my ears when I was young.

26. I met my wife [REDACTED] when I was aged sixteen years and everything just fell into place. We have been married now for forty-one years. My wife was the best thing to have happened in my life. When I met [REDACTED] I was introduced to proper family life for the first time. I had never experienced a proper Christmas or birthday until then. [REDACTED]'s mother treated me like I was her own son. I have two sons, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and three grandchildren. I love my sons, but it was hard for me to show them love. When we first got married, I couldn't go near the kids when they were bathed because of my own experience with the man in Portstewart. I would do anything for my family.

27. I was separated from my siblings and never really knew them as I was growing up. I never had any contact with them whilst I was in care. I didn't even know that my sister was in a home until recently when she told me. [REDACTED] lives in Manchester and I haven't seen him for fifty-seven years. **DL 53** lives in Southern Ireland. [REDACTED] is the only sibling I keep in contact with. [REDACTED] lives very close by, and I would love to have a closer relationship with him but he has mental health difficulties. We're not like brothers at all.

28. I never talked about my experiences with my wife, and I have only started to open up in the last year. Every time I think about what happened, I get so upset, and have so much anger inside me. I feel like my life was ruined. I don't have any happy childhood memories. I have bottled this up for so long. My two sons always knew that I had a hard childhood, but they never knew the details of what happened. It is only recently that I have started to confide in them, because they were inquisitive about the trips I was making to see the

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Inquiry. The people who were responsible for my care have a lot to answer for.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed **HIA 385**

Dated 11-03-14 ✓

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

Re HIA 385 **HIA 385**

Response by De La Salle Order

Date:

Br Pius McCarthy, Provincial Secretary, assisted in the preparation of this statement. He died on 27th May 2014 before being able to sign same. Br Francis Manning, Provincial, adopts the contents of this statement on behalf of the De La Salle Order. Certain sections may have been amended, where applicable, to reflect tense in the third person.

I, Br Francis Manning will say as follows:-

1. **HIA 385** born [REDACTED] was admitted to Rubane House on the 3rd February 1961 and was discharged to the c/o Derry County Welfare on 27th March 1964 – see **Exhibit 1**. **HIA 385** is a brother of **HIA 244**, HIA 244.
2. The only personal papers which appear to have survived for HIA 385 is a Social Welfare Report on the [REDACTED] family dated 2nd February 1961 which appears to have been prepared in anticipation of a Court Hearing – see **Exhibit 2**. Other personal records may have been among some records deliberately destroyed in a fire started by former Rubane residents at St Augustine's Youth Club in the late 1970s. **HIA 21** **HIA 21** HIA 21 was a witness to this event.
3. In respect of paragraph 5: The admission record details scarring to HIA 385's face. The Order acknowledges that **BR 15** may have had boys on his knee in the TV room. It is accepted that this behaviour is a source of allegations of abuse. The Order has made concessions in respect of **BR 15**. The Order was not aware contemporaneously of abuse being conducted by **BR 15** during HIA 385's period of residency. **BR 15** would have had a role supervising the showers, to ensure that boys washed properly and to prevent horseplay.
4. Further in respect of paragraph 5: The Order is unable to identify the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Upon receipt of further details it may be possible to identify him. It is accepted that showers were supervised and the Order maintains that supervision was required.
5. In respect of paragraph 6: **BR 15**, as prefect, had responsibility for dormitory supervision and for raising boys with enuresis during the night. He would have had reason to be entering boys rooms during the night. Raising the boys from their sleep to go to the toilet had been recommended by the nurse. It is noted that HIA 385 never saw any 'overt sexual activity'. The 'night walkers' may not have come near HIA 385 as he does not appear to have had a problem with enuresis. It appears that the "night walkers" going around with flashlights would have been the Prefects who would do their rounds until all the boys were settled down.

6. In respect of paragraph 7: A lot of boys did wet the bed. Rubber sheets were put on the mattresses and were eventually replaced by plastic covered mattresses. The Order denies that boys would have been made to sleep on soiled sheets for a week. The History of the House includes entries indicating that from an early stage the Brothers were seeking medical assistance and advice to combat enuresis – see **Exhibit 3**.
7. In respect of paragraph 8: The chores the boys were asked to do were the normal household chores that children in a family would be expected to do. Making their beds, sweeping the dormitory, the dining room the corridor, the stairs, and doing the wash up etc. Rubane House was not able to afford to have servants cleaning up after the boys. The boys would be expected to go from place to place in an orderly fashion.
8. In respect of paragraph 9: Smoking outside permitted areas, such as the dormitories etc. was a punishable offence as it was deemed to be a fire risk. It is difficult to believe that any of the Brothers would behave in such a way. While corporal punishment was permitted in the Home at that time, the easiest and most effective way would be to deduct marks from them under the award system.
8. In respect of paragraph 10: Free Dinners were prepared and delivered to the school. It was as good as in any other school in the area.
9. In respect of paragraph 11: Potato picking took place in late September/early October and not in the winter, as stated. Photographs of the 1953 harvest survive showing a mixture of shorts, jackets, t-shirts and long trousered dungarees. It is likely to have been little different in 1961-1964 though survivors of the 1964 harvest recall jeans and wellington boots were standard attire. The boys were given pocket money every evening when they came home.
10. In respect of paragraph 12: All the boys were encouraged but not forced to learn swimming.
11. In respect of paragraph 13: HIA 244 made a similar complaint. If HIA 385's mother died when he was in Rubane she could obviously not have died when HIA 244 was at Rubane — as both residents were not there at the same time. HIA 385 alleged that the Brothers told him that his mother had died. HIA 244 recounts that he believes he found out from the other boys. It is possible that parents may have died and the Brothers themselves may not have been notified. If the Brothers had been notified every effort would have been made to get the resident to the funeral. Absconding was an offence for which HIA 244 may have been punished but it is very unlikely that he would be punished if the absconding was linked to the fact that his mother had died.
12. In respect of paragraph 14: Visits by family members or Welfare were welcome but outside the control of the Brothers.

13. In respect of paragraph 15: The local doctor visited regularly and there was an annual medical inspection. The Community Nurse visited every month to check medical needs and give advice re: nits lice, bedwetting and other minor ailments. The History of the House records the visit of eighty members of the General Workers Committee on the 18th February 1962. The History of the House also records, for 1963, that a number of Saturday outings to Belfast were successfully organised – see **Exhibit 4**. HIA 385's speech impediment is noted on his admission records. Extracts from History of House and Events of Importance Log Book attached.
14. In respect of paragraph 16: Every boy of school leaving age attended class. The Social Welfare report of 3rd February 1961 suggests that his schooling attendance up to age 11, and arrival in Rubane, was very poor indeed.
15. It is noted that HIA 385 does not recount being in Rubane with HIA 244 as alleged by HIA 244 in his statement at paragraphs 10 & 14 nor does HIA 385 recount the alleged assault by **BR 28** as recounted by HIA 244.
16. It is noted that HIA 385 does not name any Brothers other than **BR 15**
17. It is noted that HIA 385 does not make any allegation about being sexually abused himself. HIA 385 was in Rubane with **BR 17**, **BR 12**, **BR 6** and **BR 14**.

Signed: *Dr Francis Manning*

Date *12 June 2014*

HIA REF: [385]

NAME: HIA 385

Response by Health and Social Care Board

DATE: [25 September 2014]

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

Witness Statement of the Health and Social Care Board

Marian Hall, Children's Services Project Manager, assisted in the drafting of this statement.

The Health and Social Care Board will say as follows: -

1. HIA 385, born [REDACTED] was first admitted to Rubane House, Kircubbin on 3 February 1961 on recommendation of County Londonderry Welfare Committee as set out in its letter dated 2 February 1961 (see exhibit 1 of the De La Salle Order's statement, RUB-2096).
2. In the Applicant's statement and that of the Order it is stated that the Applicant was discharged from Rubane House on 27 March 1964 however the Board notes that exhibit 1 of the De LaSalle Order's statement records '22/6/63 care of [REDACTED] under the heading 'Particulars as to leaving the school by licence or discharge'.
3. The Board notes that the Applicant does not recall any inspections or the Welfare checking on him (paragraph 14 of his statement, RUB 734), that he was really let down by the system in general (paragraph 18, RUB 735) and that he reported physical abuse to the welfare more than once but he was told that he mustn't tell lies. (Paragraph 21, RUB-736).

4. No records have been found in the possession of the Board in relation to **FIA 385** **FIA 385** and consequently the Board cannot provide any detailed information or response regarding his statements or exhibit any relevant documents.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed *Diana Hall*

Dated *25 September 2015*