

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 55

Witness Name: HIA 55

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

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 55**

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I, HIA 55 will say as follows:-

**Personal details**

1. I was born [REDACTED] I was the eldest of three girls. My younger sisters were called [REDACTED] and HIA 27 [REDACTED] was born on [REDACTED] HIA 27 was born on [REDACTED]. We also had an older brother called [REDACTED] but he died shortly after he was born.
2. We lived in [REDACTED] My mother and father were separated. My father moved to [REDACTED] and was living with another woman. My mother had renal problems and was in and out of hospital and had numerous operations. My mother had to go to [REDACTED] England for her operations. When my mother became unable to look after us my father came back from England and got [REDACTED] the parish priest, to put us in to care. My father and [REDACTED] took us to Belfast on the train. My father told us we were going on holidays which of course we weren't. When we arrived at Nazareth House he gave us all a kiss and said goodbye. We never saw him again.

**Nazareth House, Belfast ([REDACTED])**

3. I understand that the records show that I was placed in Nazareth House, Belfast on [REDACTED] when I was nine years old along with my two sisters

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however I thought that I was seven when I was placed in Nazareth House. I never saw my sisters while we were in the home. [REDACTED] and I were in separate groups in the older girls section and HIA 27 was initially in the nursery. The next time I really saw them was when we came home again. We did not have contact with our mother while we were in the home. I missed my mother very much. My father did not visit either. The only visitors I remember were a [REDACTED] and a blond lady who I saw for half a day in the visitor's room along with my two sisters. A nun was there the entire time. I have no idea who they were. I never saw them again.

4. When we arrived we were made to take off our clothes and put on the home's clothes. All the girls in the home were dressed the same and I hated that. I think that SR 181 was in charge of my group. I was in a dormitory with about twenty other girls. We had to sleep with our arms crossed over our chests. I have no idea why we had to sleep that way. I just knew that if you didn't sleep that way the nuns would have hit you. I remember being hit once for not sleeping with my arms crossed over my chest.
5. In the morning we were woken by a bell. We had to stand over our bed and say prayers. We then had to make our bed. If we did not make it properly the nuns would strip the bed clothes off and make us do it again. We then had breakfast. The breakfast was awful. We got a little bit of porridge or a small piece of toast. We normally did not get anything else to eat until tea. I was always hungry. I remember pinching things out of the kitchen or taking food out of the bin. I was caught once taking food from the kitchen and was hit. After breakfast we went to school. The school was in the grounds of Nazareth House. I remember we got a small bottle of milk at school which we were eager to get as it was such a long day. In the winter the milk in the bottle might have been frozen. We only got to play for an hour. The different groups played outside at different times so I never even got to see my sisters in the playground. I used to always ask for my sisters but I was never allowed to see them. At dinner time we maybe got potatoes and vegetables. I never remember getting meat. We had to go to the chapel beside the convent for prayers every evening. We always seemed to be praying. We were made to work hard. We had to scrub the floors, make the beds and clean.

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We had a bath once a week. They put Jeyes fluid in the bath. Twenty of us had to line up to be bathed at the same time.

6. I remember that we were called by numbers and not by our names. I was number seventeen. As we were all called by numbers I find it difficult to recollect anyone's name. It was difficult to make friends as the girls were always changing.
7. I remember a girl in the bed beside me who regularly wet her bed. In the morning the nuns would strip her night dress off her, wrap the wet sheet round her and hit her as punishment.
8. I only remember the names of two of the nuns **SR 181** who was in charge of my group who would have been going into her forties and **SR 182** who was the head nun and who would have been in her forties. The nuns were very cruel. They did not seem to have time for us. They were physically and emotionally cruel to us. There was no warmth or affection from them. I did not have a proper childhood in their care. They did not talk to us about growing up. When I got my first period I did not know what to do. When I told a nun all I was given was rags. I then had to ask for rags every month. The nuns used to smack us with their rosary beads on the body with very little provocation.
9. I ran away twice with another girl that I used to clean the floors with. I was trying to go back home to **██████████** but the police caught us both times before we made it to the train station in Belfast. We were punished by being locked in separate cupboards for a couple of hours. I was hit when I was put in and when I was let out I was hit again and we got no supper. The day after the first time I ran away a policeman visited the home to warn me not to run away again. There was a nun in the room the whole time. I told the policeman how hungry we were and he said they would have to do something about it but he never did.
10. While I was in Nazareth House one of the girls in another group died. I do not know what happened to her as the nuns kept what happened very quiet.

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11. My only good memory of my time in Nazareth House is being taken to the pantomime at Christmas time one year and getting sweets.
12. I have no recollection of any inspections in the home or of receiving any medical attention when I was in the home.
13. I left Nazareth House along with my sisters on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1950 when I was fourteen years old. I was told a week before we left that our mother would be coming to get us. The day we left the home's clothes were taken off us and we were dressed in clothes our mother had brought for us. I remember I had a pink coat. We put our arms around each other and our mother. She really loved us but there was nothing she could do about her health.
14. Mum took us back home to [REDACTED] and I remember she gave us all the food we could eat. I could never tell my mother what I went through in Nazareth House because of her health. My relationship with my mother was always good even though we had been separated for so long. I could not have wished for a better mother. However, the separation from my sisters did have an affect on our relationship and we never had the same sisterly bond that we should have had if we had remained together. We remained in [REDACTED] during my childhood. My mother did different bits of work but we were always poor.

### Life After Care

15. When I was fifteen I met a man called [REDACTED] who lived with his grandmother in [REDACTED]. His mother lived in England. When I was fifteen and a half we moved to England and his mother looked after me. My mother missed me so much that after about a year she moved over to England with my other sisters. I got married to [REDACTED] when I was eighteen and we had two sons. Our relationship ended and I met another man called [REDACTED] and had another son and a daughter.
16. I gave a video interview to [REDACTED] police about my time in care in or around the beginning of 2012.

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17. I believe that the Sisters of Nazareth and the Roman Catholic Church should apologise to the children who suffered under their care and I believe that we should be compensated for the terrible childhoods we suffered. I also think there should be a memorial for people like my sister [REDACTED] who died before they were able to tell their story.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

**HIA 55**

Dated

4/6/2014

1945-46

Reg No

S. 376. 3

4068

[Redacted]

Admitted 19 November 1945

Recommended by Rev. [Redacted] P.P. [Redacted]

Parents living

mo: [Redacted] [Redacted]

4069 r

HIA55 [Redacted] r \* HIA27 [Redacted]

\*4090

[Redacted]

x [Redacted]

[Redacted]

140

1945

Belfast

19

[Redacted]

SR112

) 1<sup>st</sup> L.C. Charge of Children

SR185

) 2<sup>nd</sup> L.C. Borders

[Redacted]

Men Room

[Redacted]

Bazaar Parlours

Church Infirm Children

[Redacted]

Old men

Country Collecting

City " "

" " "

SR177

Babies

Children

[Redacted]

Old Ladies

[Redacted]

Workroom

City Collecting

SR178

Children

[Redacted]

Laundry & Amusement

Country Collecting

City " "

TAPE COUNTER TIMES	PERSON SPEAKING	TEXT
		TIMES A YEAR - IF YOU WERE CAUGHT EATING BREAD, OR IF YOUR CAUGHT EATING THIS. IF YOU WEREN'T SAYING YOUR PRAYERS PROPERLY, IF YOU WEREN'T KNEELING DOWN PROPERLY. DIFFERENT THINGS FOR YOUNG GIRLS TO HAVE TO COME THROUGH.
6083	HIA 55	AND THEY BEAT YOU WITH THE BELTS AND ROSIERY BEADS.  YEAH
6083	HIA 55	HOW MANY TIMES DO YOU THINK YOU WERE BEATEN  OH GOD. HOW MANY TIMES. I CAN'T TELL YOU THAT. I WERE BEAT THAT MANY BLOODY TIMES. TO TELL YOU THE GODS TRUTH I COULDN'T MENTION HOW MANY TIMES, COS IT WAS EVERY OTHER WEEK I WERE GETTING BELTED WITH THE BELT.  When asked, she says that the nuns didn't use the stud part of the belt to hit the girls. They beat them with their clothes on, not off
6083	HIA 55	SO DID YOU HAVE ANY LASTING MARKS AT ALL  YEAH, I'D MARKS FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS. BLACK AND BLUE MARKS YEAH. BUT NOT ONES THAT PHYSICALLY WOULD SHOW AFTER A MONTH OR TWO. SO WHEN THE PRIEST COME TO SEE US, WE'D NO MARKS HAD WE. I DON'T KNOW HOW THE OTHERS WENT ON WITH THEIR VISITORS WHEN THEY WENT TO SEE THEM. YOU DAREN'T HAVE TOLD YOUR VISITORS ANYTHING, COS THEY'D HAVE GOT A GOOD HIDING FOR IT WHEN THEY COME OUT OF THERE.
6083	HIA 55	SO OTHER THAN THE BEATINGS, AND PUTTING YOU IN CUPBOARDS, WHAT ELSE DID THE NUNS DO  TO TELL THE TRUTH, THEY DONE THAT MUCH, THEY DONE THAT MUCH, IT'S HARD TO REMEMBER HOW CRUEL THEY DID TO US, REALLY REALLY. YOU WOULD NEVER THINK A ROW OF NUNS WOULD DO THAT TO GIRLS, AND LITTLE GIRLS.



TAPE COUNTER TIMES	PERSON SPEAKING	TEXT
		<p>There were about 40 of them there. She recalls the names [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. She was really frightened of them. They were always there, ready with the belts. They weren't allowed to play or run or have any sort of fun. They were made to walk around in a circle outside. She didn't even know what a bouncing ball looked like. They got no toys, no nothing. It was all about praying. They went to the chapel next door for prayers.</p> <p>In the evenings they did nothing, but pray.</p> <p>When asked if she remembers any of the girls' numbers / names, she doesn't.</p> <p>She says when she did get out, it took her a few years to adjust to people and to trust people. [REDACTED] didn't adjust too well. [REDACTED] didn't adjust at all. She didn't talk much at all. The three sisters never spoke to each other about Nazareth House. It was never spoke of again.</p> <p>They never told their mum about it either.</p>
6083	[REDACTED]	<p>WHAT DID YOU FEEL LIKE DURING THOSE SEVEN YEARS IN THERE</p> <p>AWFUL, SHOCKING, REALLY BAD. THERE WERE NO HAPPINESS OR LAUGHTER IN THERE.</p>
6083	[REDACTED]	<p>[REDACTED] talks about when she started her periods in Nazareth House. She was 12yrs old. She had to get a toilet roll and stick it between her legs. She didn't know what a period was, or why they happened. The nuns said nothing to the girls. They didn't give the girls any sort of sanitary towels or anything. She spoke to an older girl, who told her to use toilet paper for the blood. The blood used to come through on to their pants.</p>
6083	[REDACTED]	<p>SO WHAT WOULD HAPPEN ABOUT THAT</p>
6083	[REDACTED]	<p>YOU GOT A BEATING FOR THAT</p>
6083	[REDACTED]	<p>AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR BEDDING</p>

TAPE COUNTER TIMES	PERSON SPEAKING	TEXT
6083	HIA 55	WHERE WAS THIS CUPBOARD THE CUPBOARD WAS IN THE CONVENT, OFF THE RECREATION HALL
6083	HIA 55	WHAT WAS IT LIKE A BIG DARK CUPBOARD. LITTLE CUPBOARD WHERE YOU PUT A BRUSH OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT
6082	HIA 55	HOW BIG WAS IT JUST AN ORDINARY LITTLE SQUARE CUPBOARD. AND THEN THEY LOCKED IT, AND YOU DIDN'T GET OUT UNTIL THEY COME AND LET YOU OUT  HIA 55 cannot recall the individual nuns names. She says sometimes they would pick on her for no reason.
6083	HIA 55	SO HOW LONG WERE YOU IN THE CUPBOARD FOR ABOUT HALF A DAY
6083	HIA 55	WHAT HAPPENED IF YOU NEEDED THE TOILET WHILST YOU WERE IN THE CUPBOARD YOU HAD TO JUST DO IT THERE AND THEN. WHATEVER YOU HAD TO DO. I DONE BOTH. PEE'D AND MESSED - NUMBER 2
6083	HIA 55	WHERE DID YOU DO THAT IN THE CUPBOARD. THEY WOULDN'T LET YOU OUT. SO THEN THEY HAD TO CHANGE MY WHOLE GEAR, AND I GOT A HIDING FOR THAT.  HIA 55 recalls banging on the cupboard, but they wouldn't let her out.
6083	HIA 55	SO HOW MANY TIMES DID YOU HAVE TO GO IN A CUPBOARD ABOUT EVERY OTHER MONTH OR SOMETHING. ABOUT 4 OR 5

TAPE COUNTER TIMES	PERSON SPEAKING	TEXT
		<p>she ran away again with the same girl – the gate was open again.</p> <p>This time they only got to the bottom of Raven<sup>HILL</sup>head Road (the road Nazareth House was on) when the Police picked them up and took them back.</p> <p>HIA 55 had run away because the place was that bad to be in. They got a good hiding again, and HIA 55 was locked in a cupboard all day.</p> <p>She was also made to stand on a stool in a corner all day. If you dare to move, the nuns beat you with the straps from around their waist.</p> <p>HIA 55 recalls that from time to time visitors would come – fathers and mothers. Nobody visited HIA 55 or her sisters, except for one time. A man in a soldiers uniform came with a lady with blonde hair. They made a fuss of the sisters, and gave them sweets and fruit. When they left, the nuns took the sweets and fruit off the girls – they were never given them. HIA 55 doesn't know if the couple were relatives, but they only visited once.</p> <p>Every Christmas the nuns took the children to a pantomime. They were marched in and the nuns marched up and down watching the children. They daren't as much as sneeze.</p> <p>HIA 55 says one Christmas day she was given a boys' game called "Smugglers". Her sister HIA 27 was given a black doll with one eye, and an apple and an orange. Her sister [REDACTED] was given a bag. They were overjoyed that they'd actually got a present. But the day after Christmas day, the nuns took the toys off them, and they never saw them again. They never ever had any toys to play with – not even a skipping rope. They weren't allowed to skip, or run, or play – they had to walk around. They had no freedom at all. It was worse than a prison. She cannot understand why nuns would treat children like that.</p> <p>(HIA 55 is very upset)</p> <p>She says that she never spoke about what happened to her in Nazareth House for all these years. She recalls that her mother got better and came for them. When she got out, she thought she'd come to another world. People in the street would say hello, and she'd ignore them, because she was scared to speak to anyone. It was against everything she knew to speak to anyone.</p>

TAPE COUNTER TIMES	PERSON SPEAKING	TEXT
		<p>When her mother came for them, she brought <sup>HIA 55</sup> a beautiful deep pink coat, black patent shoes and knee socks. <sup>HIA 27</sup> and <sup>HIA 55</sup> had check coats. She felt so posh. The nuns said they would dress them, but her mother told them no, she would dress her girls.</p> <p><sup>HIA 55</sup> was 14yrs old then. She told her mum that she was ready to go out to work to help her mum. Her mum took her with her to the weaving mill that Monday.</p> <p>She talks about her work in the mills – having apple tarts on Fridays – she'd barely ever tasted an apple before.</p> <p>6083 recaps and questions <sup>HIA 55</sup>.</p> <p><sup>HIA 55</sup> confirms that she was 7 yrs old when she went in to Nazareth House. Her sister <sup>HIA 55</sup> was 6yrs, and <sup>HIA 27</sup> was 4 yrs. They were all put in separate dormitories. They were not allowed any physical contact with each other at all. She would see her sisters when they were let outside in to the yards. The yards were separated by big iron gates. You were not allowed to touch your sisters' hand through the gate. They were made to walk around in a circle outside, and that was their exercise.</p> <p><sup>HIA 55</sup> confirms they were all called by a number instead of their names. Her number was either 18 or 19. She thinks <sup>HIA 55</sup> was 5. She's not sure of <sup>HIA 27</sup>'s.</p> <p><sup>HIA 55</sup> explains that her true name is <sup>HIA 55</sup>, her sisters' true names are <sup>HIA 55</sup> and <sup>HIA 27</sup>. These are the names on the birth certificates, and the names used at Nazareth House. She has no idea how it came to be that they became known as <sup>HIA 55</sup>, <sup>HIA 55</sup>, and <sup>HIA 27</sup>.</p> <p><sup>HIA 55</sup> thinks there were about 30 other girls, around her age, in her dormitory. The beds were in rows.</p> <p>She thinks the girl who ran away with her may have been called <sup>HIA 55</sup> – she doesn't know. She thinks she had an even number.</p>

Lancashire Constabulary

RECORD OF VIDEO RECORDED INTERVIEW

CHILD / YOUNG PERSON **HIA 55**

PLACE OF INTERVIEW **ASHWOOD HOUSE INTERVIEW SUITE**

DATE OF INTERVIEW **15/11/11**

TIME COMMENCED **10.45HRS**

TIME CONCLUDED **12.10HRS**

DURATION OF INTERVIEW **1 HOUR 25 MINUTES** TAPE REFERENCE NUMBER **A38924**

INTERVIEWING OFFICER(S) **DC 6083 LOCHHEAD**

OTHER PERSONS PRESENT **[REDACTED] (Daughter)**

POLICE EXHIBIT NO **NL/6083/5**

NUMBER OF PAGES **13**

*N. Lochhead*  
 Signature of interviewing officer producing exhibit

TAPE COUNTER TIMES	PERSON SPEAKING	TEXT
6083	HIA 55	<p>Introductions, equipment, purpose of interview, ground rules.</p> <p>HIA 55 says she is 75 yrs old, her dob is [REDACTED]. She is quite fit and well.</p> <p>Free Recall;</p> <p>HIA 55 says that she went in to Nazareth House in 1943 with her sisters. She got out when she was 14yrs. When they arrived there, they were taken into a big room, and her sisters were taken away from her. They were put into dormitories.</p> <p>Every day of her life in there, she had to scrub and polish the floors. If they weren't done properly she got a beating off the nuns. They used the straps around their waists, and their rosary beads.</p> <p>They were made to pray morning, noon and night. They got a little bit of schooling, inbetween, but not much.</p> <p>At meal times they were given slops, which they ate because they were starving. HIA 55 used to steal food from the kitchen, when she was 8/9yrs. She'd hide bread and jam down her knickers.</p> <p>She was caught eating jam and bread, and they put her in a dark cupboard.</p> <p>At bath time, HIA 55 had to scrub the younger children with scrubbing brushes. They put Jayes fluid over the children. When it was HIA 55's turn to get in the bath, the nuns put Jayes fluid over her. Her skin was red raw. Skin was</p>