

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 159

Witness Name: HIA 159

## THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 159  
(PROVIDED BY WIFE OF WITNESS, NL 144 ON HIS BEHALF)

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I, NL 144 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I am the wife of HIA 159 My husband died on [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
2. Prior to his death my husband prepared a statement entitled "My Time in Nazareth Lodge and Rubane House". I refer to this document as Exhibit A and it is appended to this statement. My husband did not sign this statement at any stage as he kept adding to it at various times.
3. The attached statement was written over time and typed up eventually by our daughter.
4. My husband always said he wanted his statement outlining his version of events to be taken into account and he wanted what happened to him and others in care to be recognised at some stage.
5. I have been shown documents by the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry showing admission and discharge dates for my late husband to Nazareth Lodge, Belfast and Rubane House, Kircubbin as follows:



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### NAZARETH LODGE

My name is [REDACTED] HIA 159 [REDACTED] I was born in [REDACTED] Northern Ireland. The Nazareth Lodge entrance book said my mother decided to move to [REDACTED] so that was why she had placed me in the children's home at the of age 3.

Nazareth Lodge was on the Ravenhill Road, Belafast, BT7. The ages of the boys there were from babies up to the age of 15 to 20 or older. The left the home after being found a job or they would run away. Eventually the older boys were moved out to another home in the countryside which is called Rubane house, a couple of miles outside a village called Kircubbin. Rubane House is off Gransha Road, which is off the main Portaferry Road. When they moved there, there was no more abuse from older boys, which was a great relief. They told ghost stories, chased us up and down the corridors, turned the lights out so that we ran into everything and each other, whilst they had torches to see. They would also kick us in the back in order to hurry us along when we were going to the toilet in the bathroom.

### Abuse by Nuns

The first Sunday after we made our very first communion we were all excited that we had our very first prayer book, our excitement was too much for one of the nuns, [REDACTED] SR 100 [REDACTED] During the service all the boys had to pass their book to the her (Sister [REDACTED] SR 100 [REDACTED] because she thought we weren't paying attention.

After mass all the younger boys were seated on benches along the corridor, while some of the older boys just walked up and down threatening "you're for it" and smiling. [REDACTED] SR 100 [REDACTED] came out of a bedroom and told us that we were getting six of the best (6 strokes of the cane) for carrying on in chapel. One by one we were in the bedroom and held down by four older boys and made to sit down on the benches again. One boy was screaming so loud that the nun was going to give us all six more unless he was quiet. While the older boys were encouraging him to scream louder.

The second time that I was beaten by a nun was due to be being late for choir practice in the Annex to the Theatre hall at the back of the main house. I was late because I had been told to go and see [REDACTED] SR 163 [REDACTED] at the top of the house (the attic) and get my eye cleaned as it was artificial and needed cleaning once a week. Choir practice had just started when I rushed into the little ante room that stored chairs, stage props, school desks etc. As I entered [REDACTED] SR 152 [REDACTED] saw me and came out of the choir room and shouted at me "Why are you late?", without waiting for a reply she picked up a broom and started beating me. It seemed to last ages but was probably only about 2 or 3 minutes while I cowered under a desk. The only reason she stopped was because the brush broke on the desk I sheltered under. She was so red in the face and sweating (that today people would say she had lost the plot). I crawled out and still had to give my best in the choir despite being in agony.

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### Wall of Shame

On Friday evenings around 7 or 8 o'clock we were all go into the bathroom, to a long sink like a horse trough about 10 feet long. We would have our hair washed with Jeyes Fluid to keep our heads clean from infestations.

It was also the time when you would have your underpants examined to see if they were soiled. If they were, we had to stand naked facing the wall for everyone to see and wait until everyone else had finished washing there hair, before you could wash your own. I was there a few times by myself, but I don't think about cared but the nuns.

On one occasion one of the nuns [SR 152] or [SR 47] came into the bathroom and called silence. She said 3 boys had done something wrong and had to be punished, by being made to sit in a cold bath for over an hour. There names were [NL 69], [DL 398] and [NL 70].

There was also a boy there called [NL 71] who was about 18 or 20, he used to watch boys from an air vent in the broom cupboard out in the corridor. After a while he would come in and take a boy out. Recently I found out from one of my friends that he had been abusing him.

[REDACTED]

I [REDACTED] when I was 6 or 7 years old while playing a game of hide and seek. A group of us younger boys were choosing who was going to cover their eyes and count. I was selected and when I was finished counting took my hands from my eyes. An older boy had made a cane from a privet hedge by stripping the leaves and it was he that hit me [REDACTED] with it. The last thing I saw on that dull day was an aeroplane passing over before I passed out. How long I was unconscious for or what day of the week it was I have no idea. I can't remember much, I had to go to hospital and [REDACTED]

Several months later I was taken for a [REDACTED] on [REDACTED] to a [REDACTED]

I did realise at the time, but when [REDACTED] I lost an opportunity to ever join the armed forces or police. Since then I have always been classed as disabled and this meant that there were times when I was paid a lower wage than my work colleagues. I was often considered backwards or slow and this prevented me entering into many occupations. My disablement card was more of a hindrance than a help in finding work.

To this day I can only read for short intervals as I get bad migraines [REDACTED]

### Hospital Visits

I had several spell in hospital. The first was when I had a large bluish, multi-coloured lump on the top of my thing, about 50 pence piece. I often wondered why none of the



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nuns ever noticed that [REDACTED] One day by the swings, some of the boys were throwing lumps of turf at each other, one hit me right on the top of my thigh and I heard the teatime whistle (it was around 5 or 6 o'clock) and then passed out. The next thing I knew I was lying on one of the big leather sofas in the front room drifting in and out of sleep. I heard one of the nuns ask what time it was and someone answered 2.30am and said that Dr McSorley (local doctor had been called. I fell off to sleep and woke up in my own bed, I can't really remember much but I had been to hospital.

The next time I was in hospital was because my knees became infected and septic from cleaning the toilets and polishing the corridor floors. I remember being wrapped up in a blanket and carried to an ambulance by a paramedic.

In another incident I awoke in hospital with my right leg in plaster, I did not know if it had been broken or fractured and don't know how I got there. It was very painful and I was on crutches for a while.

On another occasion I ended up in hospital because I had cut my hand. I had tried to stop a door banging and my hand slipped of and shot through one of the small panes of glass, slashing my wrist. Blood poured out and I got a towel and wrapped it around my hand and went to bed. Later a nun, [REDACTED] SR 71 was doing her rounds when through a haze I waved at her with my bleeding arm, what happened after that I have no idea, but still have a scar on my arm.

### Loss of Contact

The nuns deliberately prevented any mother and aunt contacting me when they came to visit and withheld my mail. I remember they both came to see me but were turned away, however I had seen them, but they were too far away to hear me, this happened about 2 or 3 times.

There were occasions when I did not receive all of my letters. I remember once a boy mentioned previous, [REDACTED] NL 71 approached me and told me that the sandals he was wearing had been given to him by [REDACTED] SR 71 They had been sent to me in a parcel from my mother, which I never received.

Once [REDACTED] SR 71 told me my mother had sent a letter asking what I wanted as a present for my birthday. I could not think of anything and she suggested a scarf and gloves, I agreed, however I never received them.

I received postal orders and letters from my mother but eventually they ceased. When I was working when I was older I met a friend from the home who had been responsible for collecting the mail from the post office when we were at Rubane House (2<sup>nd</sup> children's home). He said that mail had arrived for me from Nazareth Lodge but I never received my mail while I was there either.

Years later when I was in my twenties I returned to Nazareth Lodge to visit Sister [REDACTED] SR 71 which we did regularly. On this occasion she was not about so we wandered around the grounds and entered a hall at the back of the house, which appeared to have been broken into. We went into a room above the entrance that was

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normally locked. We saw lots of toys and parcels that looked like they were gifts that had been sent to the children, but we assumed they did not receive them.

### Force Feeding

Once when I had not finished my dinner SR 152 ordered me to clear my plate. I told her I couldn't so she picked up a spoon, grabbed my jaw and forced the food into my mouth until all the food was gone. I then had to struggle to stop from throwing up.

On another occasion a few boys and I sneaked down to a large hay barn where they stored fruit to eat some bananas and apples. However we did not find any as it was too dark. The next morning all 80 boys in the whole home were ordered to form rows in the changing room. A nun called SR 34 said that some boys had been seen down at the barn and some apples were missing. Boxes of apples were carried in and we were ordered to eat all of them. After eating 5 or 6 apples they started to run out and they were then cut in half and we had to eat them.

SR 34 said that she hoped we had learnt a lesson. Lots of the boys were ill with stomach pains and had to make lots of trips to the loo.

### RUBANE HOUSE

Rubane House was a couple of miles outside a village called Kircubbin, of the Gransha Road and main Portaferry Road. I went there when I was 12 years old until the age of 15 to start work.

#### BR 17

Rubane House run by the De-La-Sale Brothers who were just as viscous as the nuns. Some brothers were easy going but at other times they could be very brutal and some boys were sexually abused and others were physically abused. In class once Brother BR 17 beat a boy called DL 419 with a bamboo cane and he was shaking and crying. The Brother only stopped when he realised that we were all watching him and not looking at books. His bamboo cane was carbonised so that it was hard and wouldn't split. At the tip

BR 17 also sexually abused me on a trip to the Newtownards hospital to pick up NL 69 who had been in for something like tonsillitis or appendicitis. When coming back it was dark, the three of us were in the front, I was in the middle. NL 69 fell off to sleep and the Brother started to interfere with me, I personally wanted to go to the loo but said nothing. He was disappointed at my lack of interest or reaction to all his fiddling.

Another time I was the called up to the blackboard in class and BR 17 suddenly grabbed my ears from behind and banged my head against the board. I had been trying to write something on the board and he got mad at me and shouted "Are you blind, can't you see it".

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**Life At Rubane House**

My years there were fairly uneventful with occasional occurrences from time to time but I believed it was the norm for everybody.

Any boys that attempted to run away were brought back and paraded in front of everybody to humiliate them and to show us what happens to any boy that runs away. The boy was flogged and received no pocket money for a month and other privileges were taken away.

As previously stated I never received any mail while at Rubane House, despite someone seeing mail addressed to me.

**St Augustine's Club**

After I left Rubane House it was St Augustine's Club, 122 Gt Victoria Street, Belfast that helped boys to find jobs and lodgings and subsidise us with rent and pocket money.

When I was 16, a year after leaving Rubane House, I was told by a friend from the home that someone had been to the club looking for me. It was a man from [REDACTED] who had been trying to get in contact with me and had left his address for me to contact him. I went to the club to enquire but nobody would tell me.

Years later I learnt that my mother had married and moved to [REDACTED] in 1950 and I can only assume that it was my step father, [REDACTED] I found out in the '90's via the Salvation Army where my mother had lived, however she had died in 1982 and I have since not been able to trace any relatives. I contacted the Catholic Care Society to try to find any information but they continue to be very unhelpful.



<sup>4</sup>  
TITLE: B.T.S and Pieces.

III.  
The older boys were in charge of us especially when the Nuns were in Chapel at Vespers. Winter times were the worst as they took great delight in scaring us with ghost stories making us run down the corridor from one end to the other shouting theres a ghost coming up. so we would run to the other end, we now know it was somebody with a sheet over him and a halloween mask on.

The worst time of all was when we were making our first communion. Learning about taking the host at the altar rails, Confession, and following the mass in our new pray books. But going to confession always seemed a very long drawn out affair waiting for ages to go in the Box. In the end it was decided to just send a few Boys at a time, as so many wanted to go to the loo that they wet themselves when they got there. But the worst was to come after Confirmation we ALL had our new pray books and being excited we were all showing each other our books and whispering the Nun in Charge warned us to be quiet or else, in the end we all had to hand our pray books along the pew to her we never did see them again. (After Mass, the Nun, SR 100 made all the boys [Full length of the corridor] sit on the benches along the wall the older boys some were watching the four other boys were in the dormitory with SR 100. one boy at a time went in laid across the bed being held down by the four boys. and caned six times across the Bum. we were not allowed to make any noise after it was over but sit quietly. one boy did, heard his head off and the older boys found this funny and egged him on. SR 100 Come out and said if that boy did not stop that yelling we were all going to get it again. So the older boys used to say to him go on shout, Louder, and we had to sit there going ~~seated~~ <sup>sassch</sup> with our bottoms still sore. Not long after that every thing changed the SR 100 boys were transferred to a house in the country and Sister SR 100 was transferred to some where else, I believe because of her cruelty. New n SR 71 that is when the 4 groups were formed Sister veronica was the Marion.

SR 47 WAS. SR 152 SR 152 WAS - SACRED HEART  
SR 34 WAS. (The Choir) Names not available yet  
But SR 152 I believe knows them.  
was in charge of the choir, we used to practice up stairs in the corridor at night when it was near Christmas time and to keep our voices clear and warm SR 152 used to bring up a large pot of very hot water



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As we were all in the same boat, and we also had a bath once a month, and our hair was washed once a week in a solution of Jeyes fluid to keep us free of nits and other hair infections. There were three large enamel baths and 3 shower cubicles, both were rarely used except as punishments, as you can see from the photograph we look like skinheads. The photograph in question was taken I believe in 1952-3 on the occasion of the opening of Saint Joseph's Baby Home, with a statue of Our Lord at the entrance way, so we got dressed up in our little brown uniform and sandals for this opening day - and also we walked there on the feast of Corpus Christi, we would walk from the chapel down the Avenue saying the Rosary and Finnish beside the statue and sing some hymns. We also wore our suits on days when we went away to Bangor, Dublin, as part of the Choir, or Belfast city to make a record of some Christmas carols, and when we were on holidays to Antrim ghengariff, we also had a little scal cap which we rarely wore except in winter time when we went to Belfast after Christmas for pantomimes and a circus in the Grand Opera House, Great Victoria Street, BELFAST, which a few years ago had a complete revamp, and is still doing very well, and we also seen the finals of the Irish dancing championships there to. At the RITZ Cinema the Choir were one of the first groups of boys to see the film the Ten Commandments from the Circle which was a big thing for us and during the break we had ice cream and sweets.

NUNS.

Regardless of what seems a lot of happy times, we did have a lot of occasions to remember the bitter times, also. The Nuns could on many a time turn Viscious and Vindictive and be cruel both verbally and physically and some of these punishments came in the form of not seeing your mother or other relation when they came to see you. Verbal abuse was if you were untidy your underwer was soiled, caught doing anything which they thought was of in their minds of a sexual content and not eating your food which on a number of occasions was force fully shoved into your mouth. Physical abuse came in the form of what ever came to hand, i.e. their hands, Brush handles, or the long straps which they wore around their waists and hung down the side of their hip, rare occasions a cane was used, they could ~~make~~ stop you going out at week ends, on visits, or holidays.