

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 372

Witness Name: HIA-372

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA-372

I, HIA-372 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] and lived with my family in [REDACTED]. I have no siblings. Both my parents are still alive.

Rathgael 1973

2. When I was 15 I was held on remand in Rathgael for approximately 6 months awaiting trial on a possession of a firearm charge. I shared a dormitory with 3 other boys. I have no complaints regarding the staff I encountered at Rathgael. However during this time a riot broke out and I was subjected to a beating by police. The police also stripped me naked and made me run through the broken glass from the riot debris. I sustained a broken nose, a broken rib, a cut to my eye which required 5 stitches and a cut to the crown of my head which also required 5 stitches.

Crumlin Road Prison – Hospital Wing 1973

3. I had just turned 16 when I was sentenced for the firearm charge and I received a 5 years detention sentence. I was sent to Crumlin Road Prison hospital wing.

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I spent a couple of months there before being transferred to Armagh Borstal. I have no complaints regarding the staff at Crumlin Road Prison hospital wing.

Armagh Borstal 1973-1976

4. During my time at Armagh Borstal I resided in B wing. The daily routine was very regimented. When I wake up in the morning I had to run to the toilet and run back. I had to make my bed in a regimental type bed pack before going to breakfast. Following breakfast I would return to my cell and be locked up until either physical training or marching. After training I would be locked up again until lunch time. In the afternoon I attended a workshop until tea time and then locked until 6pm after which I was allowed out for recreation. Recreation time involved either television or table tennis. During recreation we used to play 'murder ball' which was a game that did not have rules and involved us fighting each other. The prison officers used to watch us play this game. They would encourage us to fight boys from different religious back grounds.
5. The regime was very brutal. I was beaten on a daily basis with a baton for trivial things for example if my shoes had not been polished, if my uniform was scruffy or if I had spoken out of turn.
6. I often received beatings in my cell when I would be in my underwear. This would have been carried out by two or three prison guards.
7. On one occasion whilst in the exercise yard I was asked by a prison guard to pick up dog excrement. I refused to pick it up. My punishment for this was 14 days solitary confinement on what was known as the 'number 1 diet'. This consisted of a cup of tea and a slice of toast in the morning and a cup of tea at night. The cell I was placed in was empty with the exception of a Bible and a pot in which to urinate. At night time I was given a mattress, which was removed in the morning.
8. I knew boys who slashed their wrists and tried to take their own lives because of the regime. Some wardens actually encouraged this and would laugh and mock

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them. I recall an inmate named [REDACTED] who slit his wrists. He was taken away and I never saw him again. I was never given any explanation as to what happen him.

9. There were around 50 boys in the Borstal at that time. We all decided, both republican and loyalist inmates, that we would not tolerate the daily beatings anymore. It was agreed the next time one of us received a beating we would turn on the guards. Shortly after this agreement, one inmate refused to go to his cell and the prison guards began to beat him. The remainder of us turned on the guards. I recall there were around 6 or 7 guards on duty on the wing. The guards managed to get out of the wing. The following day police and army came into the wing and beat us before transporting us in vans to Crumlin Road Prison. Whilst dressed in just our underwear. When we arrived at Crumlin Road Prison we were made to run along a corridor to our cells. The corridor was lined with approximately 40 prison guards armed with batons. We were handcuffed to the rear with cable ties, all the while being beaten by guards. We were then locked in our cells for 7 or 8 days before being moved to a H Block at the Maze Prison. I served the remainder of my sentence at the Maze Prison as I understand Armagh Borstal closed because of this incident.

10. During my time at Armagh Borstal three prison guards stand out as being particularly brutal. They were, [REDACTED] known as [REDACTED] because he was an [REDACTED] another guard called [REDACTED] and another called [REDACTED] who was also [REDACTED] with a [REDACTED] accent. [REDACTED] was the main instigator.

Life After Care

11. When I left the Maze Prison a local politician had sourced employment for me at the [REDACTED] I remained in this same employment for [REDACTED] years until my retirement. I married and had three children. Although I am currently divorced I still see my wife and one of my daughters lives with me.

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Statement of Truth

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

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Signed _____

Dated 9-4-15