

**Name: Stephen Burrows**

**DOB: 30/03/1965**

**Name of Care Home/s: BELLSFIELD CHILDRENS HOME. CARDROSS ASSESSMENT CENTRE. BLAIRVADACH CHILDRENS HOME. ST JOSEPH'S GLASGOW. GELISLAND APPROVED SCHOOL. REDHEUGH KILBIRNIE.**

**Reason for going into care: Both parents were alcoholics, DV, Father physically abusive.**

**Age in care: Approximately 7-17 years of age**

#### **BELLSFIELD CHILDRENS HOME. AGED 7-10.**

I cannot track with great accuracy when and where I was placed, because I was moved in and out of different homes repeatedly. My childhood was a sick odyssey. When the journey finally stopped, I could not tell a soul about what I had seen or the places I had been. If you will forgive my little inaccuracies, what I tell you now has been bottled up inside me for decades, like a fifty-year- malt whisky. Time passed slowly, yet before I knew it, I was eight, then seventeen. Birthdays, Christmas, family moments, all were lost in a blur of hate. My head was dizzy, like a car crash. I wanted to say, "Wake me up when it's all over." How can I tell my pain in such small words? You need to see it, feel it, smell it to know the truth.

Both of my parents were alcoholics, my physically abusive father left when I was 7, but my mother kept on drinking. I had a Social Worker, who said I should stay with my grandmother as part of a children panel. She was old and sometimes, I was too much for her at times, so I would bound in and out of Bellfield's Children's Home, as respite care. I was placed there about four or five times over the space of 3 years. I remember is being beaten, traumatised, and raped by men, often daily or weekly. Bellfield and the home in Helensburgh were particularly bad. Every day there was punching, kicking, and slapping.

#### **CARDROSS ASSESSMENT CENTRE AGED 11 SEVERAL SHORT STAYS**

In Cardross the pain and intensity were extreme, the treatment was vindictive and malicious. Violence was ever present. We were treated like caged circus animals, beaten for the slightest things.

#### **BLAIRVADACH CHILDRENS HOME AGED 12 FOR 6 MONTHS**

At age 12, I informed my Social Worker, that I didn't want to stay with my mother again, Helensburgh, was much the same as the other homes. For wetting the bed, I was punished with carbolic soap in my mouth. In more than one place, staff beat me, called me "pissy," or turned a fire hose on me. They rubbed my face in cold wet urine. This was child torture, and it happened to me more times than I care to remember. I saw it happen to others too. A staff member urinated over me while calling me names, emphasising my humiliation. In every place we received the belt.

#### **ST JOSEPH'S GLASGOW AGED 13 FOR 1 YEAR.**

St Joseph's was also brutal. Everywhere was the same, just with slight differences. I was locked in cells naked, cupboards, boarding cupboards, broom cupboards. I urinated and defecated where I was held because I had no choice. The darkness played tricks on my mind. I wondered how long I would be there without water, whether I would ever see the light or the sun again. It was almost a relief to

be taken out and beaten, just to breathe different air. At St Joseph's, I was raped by the brothers. I was taken on trips and holidays in Ireland to meet other men, where they were told to use my mouth and my body. These trips were horrific. There were no postcards from the seaside. I was also beaten because I was Protestant, not Catholic, and forced to go to mass. I have forgotten many things, names, friends, conversations, even the décor. I remember a social worker visiting me, looking concerned but helpless. I cannot recall names, but I remember faces, hair, and expressions. I finally stood up to them and threatened them to stop; I then got moved to a list D school in Beith

**GELISLAND APPROVED SCHOOL BEITH. AGED 14 FOR 3 MONTHS.**

Beith was particularly bad for physical violence, with shorts pulled down and thrashings until you bled and cried.

**REDHEUGH SALVATION ARMY – KILBIRNIE AGED 14-17 FOR 3 YEARS.**

I was also violently and frequently sexually abused here too by both staff and the other boys. At first it was oral sex, then it became both oral and anal at the same time. It happened in quiet rooms, toilets, or offices, wherever they could find sordid privacy. One rapist put cigarettes out on me or had boys beat me up to keep me silent. It felt as though I had something written on my head that said I could be raped. I ran away as I couldn't take it anymore. I slept rough with nowhere to go and nothing to eat. I relieved myself wherever I could and cleaned myself however I could.

As an adult, I visited many of these places again. Some were destroyed, some derelict, some turned into day centres or used for other purposes. I wanted to see where I had slept and where I had been hurt. I heard that boys had died, that some had gone to jail, and that some people were convicted for hurting children. I felt compelled to revisit these homes, drawn back to them. While others dream of flying, I dream of crying. I wake up in tears, crying for the boy I once was. There is no peace in my dreams, only heartbreaking pain. My ex-wife was burdened by my stories. My brother was told, but not in detail, my wife was burdened by my stories. What I have found in life is that I am scared, scared of everyone, scared of being judged. The stigma is real, and I cannot handle it. My life has been a difficult slog. I have spoken to healthcare teams about the beatings, but never in the detail I share here today. You have the chance to redeem me, to tell me that I am not to blame, that I did not deserve it.

My mental health is badly affected; I suffer from panic attacks. PTSD. I don't sleep very well. When I did open to healthcare professionals. I felt like I was never believed.

