

Boy, 8, made to say sorry to his 'rapist'

Ex-children's home resident tells inquiry of ordeal

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A BOY of eight was repeatedly raped at a notorious children's home by his 'housefather' – then branded a liar and forced to apologise to him, an inquiry heard yesterday.

The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI) was told the Quarriers Village in Bridge of Weir, Renfrewshire, was similar to a 'prison' – except that prisoners were treated more kindly than residents.

A 67-year-old witness, using the name Troy, was admitted to Quarriers aged seven. He said the man in charge of the house where he lived was 'pure evil' and told the boys to call him 'father'. Troy described a regime where children were forced to eat their food and, if they were sick, forced to eat their own vomit, while bed-wetters had to sleep on the floor.

He said children who ran away were beaten when they were returned, leaving them screaming and badly bruised, while physical 'punishments' were routinely meted out. He told the inquiry: 'You got punished not just one night or two nights, but many nights.'

He sobbed as he told the Edinburgh hearing he was raped by his housefather while clearing up after dinner one evening, an attack that left him 'screaming in agony'. This was repeated a further three times over his years at Quarriers, robbing him of his 'dignity', he said.

Troy told the inquiry: 'I was screaming, I was begging, I lost my religion through that.' After the attack, the rapist, who cannot be named for legal reasons, beat Troy with a belt and had his foot on Troy's back as he ordered him not to tell anyone about his ordeal.

Troy informed staff at the home's main office – but was told: 'You apologise to that man right now.'

He said he was taken back to the 'cottage' – as the large Victorian properties where children lived were called – and belted again.

He said his abuser reminded him he had been told to keep quiet, and that he was a 'dirty child'.

Troy said: 'It was drummed into me, if anyone asked me, I had to tell them I fell out of a tree. There were many kids in that cottage who fell out of a tree.' He said he told no one else about the attack and 'kept it locked away', adding that in later life he 'lost count of the times I have tried to commit suicide'.

Troy said he broke down on finding out at the SCAI that Quarriers had apologised to abuse victims. He said: 'That was all I wanted; so many of us wanted that apology.'

Another witness, Arthur, who was born in 1950, was admitted to the home in 1957 when his mother became ill with tuberculosis.

He said he was forced to eat his own vomit and children were strapped if they watched as others were physically disciplined, as they had been told not to look.

A third witness, Jenny, who was born in 1951, was admitted to Quarriers in 1955. She said she initially thought it was 'like a Utopia'.

But she said that a woman in her early twenties who cared for her was 'pure evil' and washed her mouth with carbolic soap, telling Jenny she would 'go to hell' and that she should be 'more grateful'.

A PE teacher sexually abused Jenny when she was aged eight or nine, something which happened seven times over 18 months, the inquiry heard.

Other girls were also said to have been sexually abused by him, but the teacher – who cannot be named for legal reasons – later moved to another school.

In a statement read out to the inquiry, Jenny said she believed one girl at Quarriers had died of an epileptic fit and in another case a baby had choked to death in a cot, yet she claimed there was no record of these children's burials.

The inquiry, before Lady Smith, continues.