

Paedophile branded the Beast of the Belltower abused boys at notorious children's home

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A convicted paedophile who was branded the Beast of the Belltower sexually abused two young boys five decades ago while working at a notorious children's home.

John Porteous, 92, was deemed unfit to be criminally tried or to appear in court in relation to the charges, following independent medical assessment.

After an 'examination of the facts' at Greenock Sheriff Court, he was found to have targeted the victims between 1966 and 1972 while working as a houseparent at Quarriers Village near Bridge of Weir, Renfrewshire.

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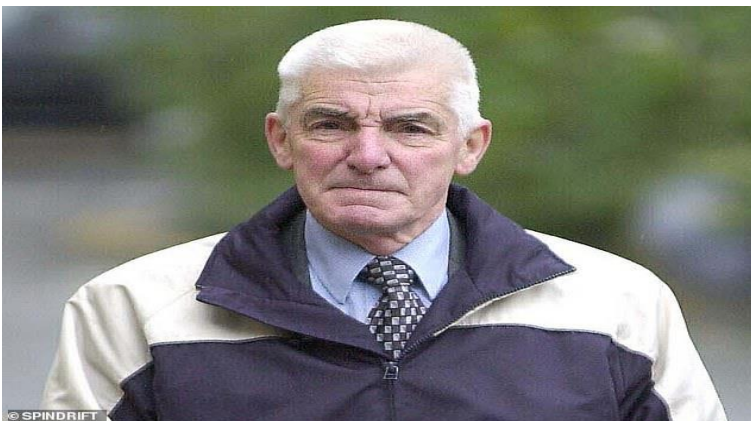
Two charges - one of indecent assault and another of lewd, indecent and libidinous practices and behaviour - were found to be established, the Crown Office said.

His name has now been added to the sex offenders' register for five years.

Porteous was previously convicted of sexually abusing two boys at Quarriers in the 1960s and 1970s following a trial at the High Court in [Glasgow](#) in 2002.

He was jailed for eight years but the sentence was later cut to five years on appeal.

Porteous, who later gave evidence to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI), never admitted his crimes and continued to protest his innocence while in jail.



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Porteous was found to have targeted the victims between 1966 and 1972 while working as a houseparent at Quarriers Village near Bridge of Weir, Renfrewshire



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David Whelan, who was abused by Porteous, told the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry in 2018 that he believed a paedophile ring may have been based at the home

Commenting on the court's latest findings, one of Porteous's victims, David Whelan, a campaigner for the rights of victims of institutional abuse, said:

'There can be no doubt whatsoever that John Porteous is a convicted paedophile and that he abused children in his care while an employee of Quarriers.

'This is despite his and the Porteous family's repeated denials that he abused any child, including when he appeared in person at the SCAI.

'Those who supported this convicted paedophile over the years should hang their heads in shame.'

On escaping from Quarriers at the age of 16, Mr Whelan began a successful events business.

He buried his memories of the abuse - until a phone call from **Porteous's** wife Helen, asking him to be a 'character witness' for his 'Uncle John' when he was under police investigation.

His brave decision to tell the truth instead led to the biggest police investigation into child abuse in Scotland.

Mr Whelan, 67, who was sexually abused in a church belltower before Sunday service, told the SCAI in 2018 that he believed a paedophile ring may have been based at the home.

Back in 2021, it emerged at the SCAI that Porteous had refused to apologise to Mr Whelan, and even boasted to the inquiry about 'stringent' child protection measures at Quarriers.

The SCAI was told Quarriers kept children in conditions likened to a prison camp.



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The SCAI, chaired by Lady Smith, was told Quarriers kept children in conditions likened to a prison camp



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Porteous worked as a houseparent at Quarriers Village near Bridge of Weir, Renfrewshire

Victims of child abuse voiced their fury back in 2021 after Quarriers, which had an annual income of more than £40million at the time, refused to pay into a compensation fund.

Procurator fiscal Anne Marie Hicks, of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), said: 'The COPFS consistently strives to secure justice for those affected by abuse.'

'John Porteous exploited his position of authority at the Quarriers Village to sexually abuse vulnerable young boys.'

'This examination of facts is a public airing of the evidence and an acknowledgement that what happened to these children in the past was criminal. It should never have happened.'

'It is now a matter of public record that Porteous committed these offences.'

'The court's finding also sends a clear message to abusers: no matter who you are, when the abuse happened or how long after the event it is reported, there will be a robust response from Scotland's prosecutors.'

The court had previously determined Porteous was not fit to stand trial and ordered an examination of facts, where the procurator fiscal depute and the defence led evidence which was tested before a sheriff.

Ms Hicks added: 'To any victim of similar offending, we urge you to report it when you feel ready and able to do so.

'Be assured you will be listened to and supported by our staff.

'We remain committed to investigating and pursuing those responsible for these types of offences.'

A Quarriers spokesperson said: 'We would like to reiterate our unreserved apology to people who suffered abuse while in our care. We also acknowledge the courage of those who came forward in this instance to share their story.

'Quarriers remains committed to supporting former residents and continues to work with the survivor community to ensure people who have experienced abuse can access high quality support and aftercare.'

Link to news item

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