

CARLUKE GAZETTE

Nuns 'could find no evidence' of abuse at Smyllum, Lanark



Smyllum Orphanage in Lanark

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Heart-rending allegations of decades of maltreatment at Lanark's former Smyllum Orphanage featured in the very first sitting of what will be a marathon inquiry into historical child abuse in Scotland.

Nearly four decades after the institution closed its doors, the now-ageing former occupants of the orphanage finally had their long-awaited day in court as the Scottish child abuse

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comments



But it is understood that there is anger among those who term themselves 'survivors' of Smyllum Orphanage at some of the evidence given at the hearing by members of the religious order that ran the institution, the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul.

There were audible groans from the public benches at their claims that Smyllum's punishment and medical records could not now be found despite a search of the order's archives.

The inquiry also heard that surviving nuns on the staff remembered the orphanage as "a happy place".

The leader of the order in Britain, Ellen Flynn, said that they "can find no evidence" of any abuse of children in their care in Lanark, only conceding that she was "appalled to think something had happened" and was "very sorry" if any of the many allegations were true.

She also remarked that the now-elderly Smyllum nuns were "nervous" about the inquiry into alleged events there in the 1950s and 1960s, including a claim that one child died after a beating by a sister.

Sister Flynn said that accusations of abuse had been made against "a deceased individual" and that her order had co-operated with all police investigations, adding that "our attitude is one of seeking the truth".

Some of the evidence heard at the opening hearing came from beyond the grave.

It was in the form of the written testimony of Frank Docherty, who died aged 73 shortly before the inquiry he'd sought for decades finally got under way.

A Smyllum orphan in the 1950s, he said his time there had left lifelong scars.

He wrote: "The way we were treated took away our self-esteem and was emotionally damaging. Throughout my life, I have had to put up a front to people, so people have not seen the real me.

"My childhood was taken away from me."

The initial six weeks of the inquiry, set up by the Scottish Government, will hear evidence from organisations accused of abuse.