

# **Twiggy**

in  
**The Home from Hell**



**Twiggy**

**Dedicated to my 'in-care' siblings.**

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## **PART ONE**

### **The Home from Hell**

In 1968 I was taken to an independent boy's home, which was located in North Wales. I was taken by a social worker from the social services department for Havenhead in Southall. There are no official records available to me to explain why this happened, or who it was that had authorised my placement in care. Only my mother, who is unwilling to discuss the matter with me, knows the true circumstances that led to my incarceration in an institution that is now known to have been a barbaric place of rapes, beatings and sexual abuse for many of its residents. I have written evidence, supplied to me by Havenhead social services, saying that no official records can be found that relate to my placement 'in care'.

The home was a community centre for boys, later described in the national press as 'The Home from Hell'. It was an independent business that later became known as (name withheld) Community (Holdings) Ltd. The home today, 39 years later, has long been closed down after becoming notorious for offences of child abuse that were committed, mainly by its founder, who I shall

call 'Mr Shush'. He was a charismatic man who dominated, and deviously preyed upon, the children placed in his care. He was also able to mesmerise the adult care staff with his charm and generosity. He also manipulated many officials, who considered him to be a saintly maverick figure, challenging tradition and revolutionising the approach to childcare.

The home became a dumping ground for unwanted children throughout the 1970's and 1980's. It was also a very convenient playground for its paedophile founder and his secret friends. Mr Shush, who was just 24 years old when he opened The Home from Hell, was eventually jailed in 1995 aged fifty eight. He was convicted of indecently assaulting young boys, and received a six year sentence. His twenty seven year reign of abuse was finally exposed in 1995, although I know, through personal experience, that this particular conviction only represents the tip of Mr Shushes' secret iceberg. He has since served less than six years in prison, and is now a free man, as far as I know. Many victims, some themselves subsequently imprisoned and not considered as credible, and many more who are simply unable to talk openly of the abuse they suffered, have never told the full horror story of their time in The Home from Hell. Sadly many of the boys who I knew are now dead, having committed suicide later in life. I believe their stories will never be known.

Mr Shush probably abused hundreds of children between 1968 and 1990. I witnessed him abusing boys many times, sometimes as many as fifteen boys in a single afternoon's 'medical check-up' session. These sessions were conducted in his private

bathroom on the first floor of the home; next to the clothing store and laundry room where his wife sometimes worked. His '*modus operadi*' was to invite a selected number of boys, one at a time, into the bathroom, whereupon he would lock the door and then explain that it was his duty to inspect us for head lice. He would then ask us to drop our trousers and underpants. He said he also had to inspect us for other diseases, and would proceed to massage your testicles and move his hand up and down the shaft of your penis. This would not last very long and then he would dismiss you. I remember my shame and feelings of guilt after he did this to me.



The length of time Mr Shush has served in prison is an insult to the hundreds of lives he dismantled during his reign. The effect of his manipulative and evil regime has been far reaching. Many boys, who resided in The Home, grew to be men who carried with them deep, dark emotional scars that have never healed. Not only has his reign of abusive behaviour 'infected' the lives of some who were entrusted to his care, but it has also subsequently impacted on the people who later came to share their lives with those of us who had been abused by him. Some of those boys are now also convicted paedophiles, and others have since been found dead after committing suicide, or accidentally overdosing on drugs. The

lucky ones, many of whom had suffered sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, have managed to scrape a life together after escaping The Home from Hell, only to live lives cursed with crime, broken relationships, low self-esteem and disabled hearts that have struggled to really love or trust anyone.

The account of my personal experience in The Home from Hell is by no means the worst experience that anyone ever had there, but I believe it is probably representative of hundreds of accounts that will never be written down. It is true to say that some enjoyed their time there.

I, and many others, did not.

Mr Shush abused me many times during my time at The Home. He also abused me in a tent in Spain whilst on a camping holiday. He abused me in a bedroom in his private home that he shared with his new wife, in 1970, and on numerous occasions when we lay together in the dark, on Famoel Mountain in North Wales. We were supposed to be playing war games against opposing teams of boys and staff, but he was playing a game of his own. I remember lying on the ground in the still of the night, high on the Famoel range. Mr Shush would often choose me for his team and then we would go ahead of the others to investigate the terrain.

Once we were alone he would push me down and say that the enemy was ahead. It was on these occasions he would press himself up against me in a heavy manner. I could feel his penis

sticking in my bottom. He would move about and murmur quietly in the dark. I honestly can't recall any pain, I am not even truly sure if he actually bugged me, or if he just enjoyed rubbing up against me. I was a child, and I guess I just blocked it out. I think the actual trauma has been erased from my memory. The last time he was able to abuse me was in his parent's home during 1972. He and his wife were taking me to Cornwall to start a new life with my mother and her third husband, Robert.

Mr Shush's' wife and parents were asleep, while Mr Shush was masturbating me and sucking my penis in the darkness of his parent's living room. I lay frozen like a statute on a camp bed pretending to be asleep. He later gave me money, knowing that it was the last time he could get his hands on me. I think it was about fifteen pounds.

I was, by this time in my life, sexually active and had experienced many petting sessions with girls from school, in the haylofts around the Clay area where The Home was located. I had managed to have sex a few times but had never ejaculated, and most of my sexual activity with girls was, up to this point, unsuccessful. At around the age of twelve or thirteen I had developed a friendship with a lad named Raymond. We had started to masturbate at the same time when we realised that Mr Shush was peeping into our annexed bedroom where we both slept. It was located at the back of the staff bedroom which was used mainly by Mr Shush. I do not recall any words or any formal arrangements with Mr Shush, or with Raymond, but the nights of masturbation were usually followed by extra treats from him the

following day. Ironically, one such treat was a meal out with him in the grand Merit Hall Hotel and Restaurant. This place later became Mr Shush's 'tycoon' home. Raymond and I eventually took to secretly masturbating each other and I think this affected my sexual relationships with girls. I remember being paranoid that people would think I was homosexual. This was another root cause of my growing obsession with girls and sex. I wanted to prove that I was not a 'bummer', and I later developed a reputation as a 'shagger' who could get any girl he wanted. This reputation followed me into my adult life and only ceased when I fell in love with my wife Jane in 1989.

The Home from Hell grew to around eleven homes between 1968 and 1991. It was a very profitable business, dealing with thirty eight local authorities in the UK, and had a published turnover of twenty eight million pounds between 1977 and 1990. Mr Shush expanded his empire and moved from living in a small bedroom at The Home from Hell, with an old blue VW Beetle car parked outside, to living in absolute luxury in Merit Hall. His private residence was both a home and playground to the paedophile tycoon. I visited his grand house many years later and was first greeted by his wife. Within minutes of arriving at this plush residence, I saw Mr Shush walk past the window of his large games room. His hand was lightly draped over the shoulder of a young blonde boy. I remember feeling extremely sick at this sight. I eventually left Merit Hall after waiting three hours for Mr Shush to come and see me. By this demonstration of aloofness, it seemed he still had a mental hold over me, many years after I had last set eyes on him. Without words or even seeing me, he was able to



frighten me away before I, like many before me, tried to confront him about the past. I had gone to him in a desperate situation. I had my son David with me, who was just a tiny baby, and I was hoping to get financial help from him for me and my son to start a new life. I left with some warm milk in the baby bottle that Nancy gave me and nothing else.

When I was placed at The Home from Hell I was barely eleven years old and had already experienced traumatic events in my childhood that had left me emotionally disabled, deeply scarred and very confused. I had been a patient in the Havenhead children's hospital in Southall, prior to being taken into care. I had been officially diagnosed as suffering from a hypersensitivity reaction, named erythema nodosum. Despite my mother's claim that I was telling lies about the pains in my legs, this condition was later thought to be a reaction to the extreme emotional effect of violence and mental abuse.

The day I was taken to The Home from Hell, a new nightmare began, leaving a negative effect on me for the rest of my life. Through my own subsequent research, I have learned that I was placed into care at the request of my mother. I did not attend any court hearings, I was not a criminal and I had never been in trouble with the police. I also discovered that a social worker had been a guest at my Nan's guesthouse at the time I was taken from the hospital to The Home from Hell. I wonder if there is a connection. His name was Ken.

Years later I was told that I had been reported as being out

of control at school, generally very cheeky to teachers, and quite often found playing truant from school, usually with Stuart O'Brien. This was true, but I was not a criminal. I was just a confused, shy and introverted ten year old abuse victim that desperately needed protecting from my mother's irrational and often emotionally charged lifestyle. My mother had rescued us both from the violence of my stepfather but her new life with her mother, and the separation from my little brother Ray, was too much for me to cope with. My mother had also suffered at her husband's violent hands and she was trying hard to re-build her life. My parents had failed at both marriage and child rearing, but I was the one who paid the price of their failure. I was given an unjust sentence without trial, and taken away. This damaged me for life.

I do not know who made the final decision for me to be taken to The Home from Hell. I do recall a social worker type collecting me from the hospital after I had been taken to see the bald man named William Tirem. He told me I was going to go to a nice boy's home in the countryside for a couple of weeks. This was to allow my mother and grandmother some rest, and to help me get back on my feet. I later discovered that William Tirem was a member of staff at The Home. I also discovered that he had an unhealthy interest in little boys. He 'accidentally' touched me in the showers whenever he had to opportunity and he often stood and watched when I had a bath. I do recall the feelings of embarrassment and shame. I did nothing about it because I was alone and afraid of the consequences of challenging him.

I finally left The Home from Hell some 5 years later, in 1973.

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