

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PFI
[REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is PFI [REDACTED]. My maiden name is PFI [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 1949. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Govan, Glasgow. My parents were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. My mother's maiden name was [REDACTED]. I don't remember my mother. I have only ever seen one picture of her.
3. My earliest memory is of being in an infirmary near Govan with my identical twin sister, [REDACTED] my younger brother, [REDACTED] and my older sister [REDACTED]. We all had scarlet fever. [REDACTED] has now passed away. She was a year older than me and [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] is a year younger than us. I don't know what age I was when I went into the hospital. I just remember the cots and little wooden tables.
4. We were taken straight from the hospital to Lagarie Children's Home. My mother had left us and my father, who was in the Navy, took all four of us to Lagarie. My father told me that [REDACTED] was three, [REDACTED] and I were two, and [REDACTED] was one when we went into Lagarie. I remember the day he took us. My Granny [REDACTED] was there. It was snowing and I remember my dad took us into the home and then he left.

Lagarie Children's Home, Rhu

5. It was a beautiful building. There was a big front entrance with all these stairs going up and another entrance with stairs at the back. You went in the front door and there was a reception and the matron's office on the ground floor. At the end of her office there was a big playroom, and past the office you went through some doors and there was a television room and a dispensary across from it. There was also a bedroom on that floor, with about three cots, and a bathroom with tiny little toilets and basins and a bath that looked like a baby font.

6. There were bedrooms on the middle floor and the matron's bedroom was along a passageway on that floor too. There was a spare bedroom where the matron's family would sometimes sleep. There was another room next to the matron's room where she would put you if she thought you were naughty. There was a bathroom with three baths right at the end of the passageway. There was another set of stairs up to a tower where there were more bedrooms. There was also a tiny room where the matron's boyfriend would sometimes sleep. I think he was the town clerk. I don't know anything about him. I just remember people saying that the town clerk was here.

Staff

7. The matron, Miss Anne Millar, was in charge of the home. She wore a uniform, like the ones nursing matrons wore, which was navy with a white collar and a sort of veil at the back of her head. She had whitish hair, wore glasses and was very fat.

8. I remember a lady called [REDACTED] who looked after us. I would guess she was in her thirties. She had a bedroom next to the room where we slept when we first arrived. She was very nice. There were other members of staff, not



many, but I don't remember any names. The cook was very nice. She lived near a little shop up in [REDACTED].

9. There was a gardener called Mr Skelton. He lived with his wife and daughter, whose name I think was [REDACTED], in a cottage just as you went [REDACTED] to Lagarie.

Routine at Lagarie

First day

10. Although I was only two, I have memories of my first day in Lagarie, probably because it was so scary. I remember the matron putting me and my twin up on the sideboard and saying that we were the first twins they'd ever had. She took us to the bathroom on the ground floor to give us a bath in the baby font. I remember her hitting us because we couldn't climb up into it. We were just little and it was too high. She was hitting us and we were screaming and I remember wetting myself with fear.

I remember going into a cot afterwards. Only me and my twin were put into the room with cots. I'm not sure where [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] went.

Mornings/sleeping arrangements

11. [REDACTED] and I slept in cots in the bedroom on the bottom floor at first. We'd get up in the morning, get washed and dressed and then go to the dining room and get porridge. The lady called [REDACTED] helped us to get washed and dressed. She was very nice. She helped us all the time. She used to take us to the little bathroom, where the baby font was, to get washed.
12. We weren't in the room at the bottom for long and then we moved up to the middle level. I'm not really sure what age we were when we moved upstairs, maybe about four. I can't remember how many beds were in the bedrooms



upstairs, between two and four I think. There were boys and girls in the rooms. You had a little locker and a drawer where you could put your pyjamas and other stuff, not that we had any other personal belongings. I don't remember my twin being in the same room as me when we moved upstairs, and I don't know where [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] slept.

13. I didn't wet the bed but some children did and the matron would come into the room in the morning and rub their noses in the wet sheet. It was so distressing for me to see this. I used to steal clean sheets from the cupboard and change their beds. I would take the sheets to the laundry and wash them myself when I was a bit older. I just had this feeling of wanting to protect the children. I wanted to help them whenever I saw them in distress. I always wanted a nurse's outfit at Christmas when I was young because I wanted to go into nursing, so I think I had that instinct to help people. Nobody stopped us from getting up at night to use the toilet, but I think the children wet the bed from fear more than anything.

Food/mealtimes

14. All the children ate together in the dining room. I think there were small tables for the little ones and bigger ones for the older children. I remember babies in highchairs as well. Matron sat by herself at a great big round table. She had everything brought to her on a silver tray. When you were older, you had to carry the matron's tray through to her. She had a room where all her special stuff was and we had to put her things on the silver tray and bring it into her.
15. We mostly got porridge at breakfast. I think they made it the night before because it was very solid. I ate it because I was hungry. I didn't like vegetables. I found with vegetables like cabbage, cauliflower, turnips and brussel sprouts, I would wretch as soon as I put them in my mouth. I used to put the vegetables in a plastic bag and then flush them down the toilet, or I would get my brother to eat them for me. The fat on meat used to make me



wretch terribly as well. That was another thing I'd try and hide, because you weren't allowed to leave that on your plate.

Bathing

16. When I moved up to the middle level, you'd get a bath most nights. It was always the matron who would give us a bath. For some reason she always wanted to do it. I don't remember how bathtime was organised. I just remember that she took us to the bathroom and bathed us. There were three baths in the bathroom on the middle floor. The matron would fill the bath with cold water and force your head under the water. It was so scary. You felt like you were going to die. She did that to me and my twin. I would be standing in the bathroom when it was my twin's turn and she would be screaming and there was nothing I could do. I think that was one of the worst things in my life. I don't know why the matron did that to us. I think she got pleasure from seeing us suffer.

School

17. I went to Rhu Village Primary School up in Manse Brae. We walked four times a day, because we went back to Lagarie at lunchtime. There were probably about twelve of us from Lagarie at the school. We all walked together. I think it was about a twenty-minute walk.
18. Our uniform was a grey skirt and white shirt. The boys wore long trousers. We didn't have books. We had chalk and a slate. I used to sit next to my twin but I didn't like her sitting next to me because she always wanted to copy me.
19. After primary school, I went to Hermitage Secondary School. I think we walked there as well. We wore a blazer, grey skirt, white shirt and a black tie with a red stripe.



20. In those days at school they concentrated on the brighter children. I remember if you weren't doing well in primary school you got put in the dunces' corner with the dunce hat on. I don't remember ever doing homework in the children's home or getting any help with school work.

Healthcare

21. Dr Campbell would always come if someone was ill. He lived in Rhu. He came to give us vaccinations as well, like polio shots. He tested our eyes too. He did everything. We saw Dr Campbell in the little dispensary next to the bathroom with the baby font.
22. You got cod liver oil every day and a spoonful of malt. They were good in that respect. I used to go into the dispensary and shut the door and steal the malt because I loved it so much.
23. We always had to brush our teeth at night. I remember we got tins of toothpaste which were pink or blue. I have a memory of going to the dentist, somewhere in Helensburgh I think, and being given gas in a chair and then waking up in a bed.
24. The matron never explained anything to us about what to do when we got our periods. She gave me a belt with loops and a pad, but nobody in the home told me what to do with it. I thought my periods came because I had done something wrong. I ended up going to the school nurse and asking her to show me what to do with the belt and pad.

Clothing

25. Outside of school we wore whatever they gave us to wear. Whoever was looking after us would take clothes out of the cupboards in the dormitories and give us what we were to wear. You just put on what you were given. You could be given something that somebody else had worn the week before. You got a



clean vest and pants once a week. The clothes went to the laundry once a week as well. Sometimes my gran brought us pyjamas to wear. I also remember my twin and I having lovely, little coats with a velvet trim when we were young. One was pink and the other was blue. I remember being told that pink was to make the boys wink and blue was to make them scowl. I'd always say to my twin that she was to wear the one that made them scowl. When I got older I wanted my own identity and hated being dressed the same as my twin.

Leisure time

26. When we weren't at school, we played in the playroom or took the toys outside to play. I remember playing with a doll's bath, pram and pretend ironing board. There were big woods next to the home, but I didn't like to play there because I was too scared. There was a room off the playroom with a great big rocking horse but you weren't allowed to play on that. You could see the greenhouses in the garden through the windows in that room.
27. The gardener, Mr Skelton, used to stand in his greenhouses and watch us when we were playing outside. I used to make fun of his name and scare the other kids by saying, "Mr Skeleton is coming!" My big sister [REDACTED] was friends with Mr Skelton's daughter. I think I went down to his house once or twice and was offered a cup of tea, but I didn't usually go down there because I knew it was his quarters.
28. The beach was just across the road and we would sometimes go down there for a little while. Unfortunately, because of the matron pushing my head under the water in the bath, I was always scared of going in the water.
29. I went to the Brownies in Rhu village and then the Guides and the Rangers as I got older. I was quite small when I went to the Brownies. You got points for learning things, like how to tie knots. That's how you earned the brown



uniform and yellow tie. When I was in the Rangers, they took you to a local home for handicapped children and you helped to bath the children.

30. I remember when I was older a woman called Mrs McLeod used to come in and teach us sewing and knitting. She was quite old, wore glasses and had dark hair. She was very nice. She lived in Rhu. She taught us how to make a pinafore on the sewing machine and we knitted gloves, a cardigan and socks with grey wool.

Chores

31. When we were older we had to do the laundry. We washed the sheets and hung them on the pulleys. The matron wore great big bloomers down to her knees and my twin and I had to wash them for her every week and hang them up in her bathroom, which was off her bedroom. We used to have a bit of fun with them. We'd throw them to each other, both of us telling the other that it was their turn to wash them. Sometimes we had to polish and shine the floor with a cloth on a big square thing.
32. They had rabbits in cages in the back and we had to mix oatmeal with water and feed them. I tried it one day and I loved it, so I used give a spoonful to the rabbit and a spoonful to me.

Trips/holidays

33. We never got taken away on holiday. I never went to stay at my gran's or anything like that. SNR used to go on holiday and Mrs KER used to come and look after us. She had a son and RFP, who came and stayed too. Her husband used to visit, but I don't think he stayed in the home. RFP and were spoiled brats. They obviously had everything they wanted and they treated us like dirt. We used to say, "Here come the spoiled brats".



34. There were great big bikes at the top of the stairs which were supposed to be for us to play on, but we weren't allowed to ride them. One time when the matron went on holiday, I took a bike all the way down the stairs and went for a ride round Rhu. I fell off and hurt my knees, and I remember thinking that this had happened because I had stolen the bike. I only dared take the bike when the matron wasn't there because you felt you had freedom when she wasn't there.
35. The company Westclox took us out for the day and gave us all a watch, but the matron took them off us as soon as we got in the door and we never saw them again. I remember being so chuffed about getting a watch from somebody I didn't know, and I was excited about learning the time. I remember thinking that the matron was probably going to give the watches to RFP and [REDACTED]. We had to write a thank you letter to Westclox for taking us out for the day and giving us a watch.
36. I remember going to a party at Faslane Naval Base. We went there on a Royal Navy bus. I remember seeing this big ship, the HMS Vanguard I think, and thinking that it was so big it was going to fall on me.
37. I also remember going to the theatre one time and going to see a movie, The Five Pennies. I remember the movie because I was quite moved by it. We went for a picnic once with the matron, to Gourock I think, where a man with a bald head and glasses had a place. That's all I can remember about that day.
38. I also remember when the Royal Family came to Rhu and we stood outside with our little flags, waving.

Birthdays/Christmas/treats

39. I remember having birthday parties and blowing out the candles on a cake. We didn't get birthday presents.



40. We got cakes and sandwiches and sausage rolls at Christmas. We got Christmas dinner, probably turkey, but I was more interested in the cakes and other treats. I used to stuff myself with meringues and cream cakes.
41. I always wanted a nurse's outfit, a sweet shop and a knitting kit at Christmas. You would get up in the morning, all excited, and your presents with your name on them would be laid out on the floor in the room where the rocking horse was. You'd get sweets and an apple and orange as well. You more or less got what you wanted, but unfortunately if the matron decided she wasn't happy with how you behaved, she took your sweets and presents off you and you wouldn't see them again. I found that very upsetting. Later on when I was older, I said to her that I didn't want anything if she was going to take it away again.
42. I remember one Christmas Dr Campbell dressed as Father Christmas and brought in the Christmas tree. They had Christmas music playing and the matron was asking us, if we wanted to give Father Christmas a kiss. I then heard him speak and I said I wasn't going to give him a kiss because I knew he was Doctor Campbell, not Father Christmas.
43. There was a woman next door to Lagarie who we called Colonel Barge. I think we called her that because her father was a colonel. She had beautiful red hair. We used to go into her garden for Easter egg hunting. You'd find the eggs and try and stuff what you could down your throat because you never got to keep all the eggs you found. The matron would take them from us. Somebody used to donate a beautiful, big Easter egg with flowers on it every year as well. I really took to chocolate. I adored it.
44. If you were very good, the matron would sometimes say "[REDACTED], go to the cupboard and bring out the sweets for the children". When she was in a good mood, she called me and [REDACTED] "[REDACTED]", but that wasn't very often. She usually just called us PFI and [REDACTED]. There was a locked cupboard with Mars bars, Milky Ways and all different things. These treats



were meant for us but we didn't always get them, so I used to fill my pockets with the chocolate bars and hand them out to the other children on the way to school. I don't know why the matron trusted me with the keys. I knew it was stealing, but they were ours and the matron didn't give them to us very often.

45. We used to get a digestive biscuit as a mid-morning snack when we weren't at school. They were kept in a brown box and were given out by the matron in the morning.

Religion

46. We walked to the church in the village every Sunday. I wore a smart dress, gloves and a bonnet to church. The matron would sit in a seat just below the pulpit. I think she belonged to the committee or something like that. You got a penny to put into the collection at church. It was the only money we saw apart from when my dad used to give us a half crown.
47. The minister was very nice. I think his name was Mr Robinson. I think he had adopted his son, [REDACTED]. He was a black boy. He was the only black boy I ever saw as a child. He was very nice too.
48. I remember going into the garden when I was about seven and praying to God and saying, "God, please get us out of this home because I feel we've had enough". I only had my faith to help us. I said I would give my life to the Lord if he got us out of there. And I did give my life to him.

Visits/Inspections

49. My dad came on the bus from Glasgow to visit us whenever he could. He always wore a suit and was very smart. He was away from home a lot so he couldn't always visit. He was in the Navy at first and then he went into building work when he left. He used to be away from home for about six months at a time.



50. My dad would take us out for tea and he'd give us sweets and a half a crown so that we could buy something when we went back to Lagarie. Matron would take the sweets and money off us when we got back, so when I got older I used to tell my dad not to give us anything to take back. I'd say that we should just go out for tea and eat as much as we could. He took us to sweet shops or ice cream shops in Helensburgh and we'd run along the beach and play in the bandstand.
51. I never saw my mum. I remember asking the matron if she had ever heard from my mother and she said no.
52. My gran came to Lagarie once in a blue moon. She didn't come to visit us. She came to visit the matron and she always told the matron to hit us if we were bad. My gran told us that she said that to the matron. She wasn't a very loving person. My dad had six sisters but none of them came to see us. I don't know why they were never interested in us.
53. As far as I know, no official visitors ever came to Lagarie. There was no social worker or anybody like that involved with us. Nobody came to inspect the place or speak to us. Nobody ever came and asked me how I was getting on there or how I was being treated.

Other children

54. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were my best friends. We called them [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They were around the same age as me. I think we were all more or less the same age. We used to go down the fire escape at night and steal the apples off the tree and waken up with stomach ache.
55. I remember little girls called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I think [REDACTED] was a little younger than [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was too small to carry her school case on her back so I used to give her a piggy-back. I used to say to her that if I had a daughter I would



call her [REDACTED]. There was a little child called [REDACTED]. He used to go blue. I remember the matron telling us that a little boy had died and we felt terribly sad. She didn't tell us what happened to him. I'm not sure if the little boy was [REDACTED].

Abuse at Lagarie

56. The matron was a terrible woman. I was petrified of her. It's difficult to explain the fear we lived with. Whenever you had to walk past her office, you would tiptoe because you were so scared she would come out. If she was in a good mood, she might take you into her sitting room and sit with you for a few minutes but otherwise you didn't want to go near her office or her sitting room. You'd shiver when she walked past you because you were so petrified.
57. I don't think the matron was normal. I think she got pleasure from seeing us suffer. You got a hiding whenever she felt you had done something wrong. She'd hit you unnecessarily. You didn't always know what you had done, or it would be for something small like dropping your bible accidentally in church or laughing in church. She was always giving me a hiding. I'd say it happened every couple of days. She would put me over her knee and hit me on the bum with either the slipper or the belt. She would hit me so hard that my bum would be black and blue for ages. When she was very angry, she would pull you by the hair and drag you down the passage.
58. I changed the penny I got for church for two ha'pennies once and put one ha'penny in the collection and bought a gobstopper with the other. I remember eating the gobstopper in the church and I got a hiding for that. I felt guilty for the rest of my life for not putting that ha'penny in the collection.
59. I had to wear little round glasses to school when I was young and the other children called me "Four eyes". I didn't want to wear the glasses so I used to



hide them in the hedges and then I could never find them when I went back for them. I did that quite often and got a hiding from the matron each time.

60. She used to examine our shoes every week. If the heels were down, she'd throw the shoes at you. Unfortunately, I was very heavy on my feet so I often got hit with the shoes. She used to say that she'd put tackety boots on me, which were like army boots. When I was a bit older, I'd be cheeky and say to her, "Do you want us to fly in the air to school?" I don't know where I got that from. She would just answer me with a smack.
61. She used to look at me and say, "PFI [REDACTED], you are the bold one of the twins. You are as bold as brass". She wanted to hurt me. And she would say that we would all go to prison when we grew up. I used to think that maybe I would go to prison for stealing the sweets.
62. One of the other things she used to do was hit me under the chin with her hand. I hated it when she did that as it made me bite my tongue.
63. Another horrible thing she used to do was stick her two fingers down my throat to make me vomit. Why she did that I do not know. She'd also give you too much syrup of figs and you'd have diarrhoea for a couple of days.
64. If you got one spot on your face, she would cut out holes in a piece of gauze for your eyes, nose and mouth and make you wear it on your face for a few days. I didn't want to go about with that on my face, but I wasn't allowed to take it off until she said so. She'd say to me that I was to stay away from the rest of the children because I was infected, or she'd say that I had scabies. She'd sometimes put gentian violet all over my face as well. I'd look like an idiot. I didn't go out looking like that. I would stay in the home, but the other children would see me. I found it very upsetting.
65. If you got lice in your hair at school, she would bone comb your hair, put stuff on it and then cut it very short and tell you to stay away from the other kids, or



she'd stop you from going to school. I don't know if she did these things to the other children. I do know that it wasn't just me who got hidings, but I am only telling the story of what happened to me. I got upset if my twin got a hiding. I remember [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] wanted to run away one time, and I told them not to because they would be half-killed if they got caught.

66. One night the matron put me in the dormitory right next to her room. I think I was about seven. I don't know what I did, but I must have done something bad because she came in during the night when I was sleeping, and she stripped my bed and made me stand at the bottom of the bed. She didn't put the light on. Every time I got back into bed, she made me get out again and stand at the bottom. She did this the whole night until the next morning. I asked her why she was doing it, but she didn't answer me. She didn't say a word about it the next day. I think she was doing it to play with my mind. It's only when you're older that you realise it was psychological abuse. She wanted us to be scared of her and we were.
67. The matron caught me putting my vegetables in a plastic bag one day and she sat me at her big, round table and filled a bowl up with vegetables and made me eat them. I was vomiting as I was eating but she made me carry on eating them, telling me that if I didn't eat them I'd get them for supper, and if I didn't eat them at supper, I'd get them again for breakfast. She didn't care that I was being sick. Unfortunately, it put me off those vegetables for life.
68. She used to cut our hair in a bowl cut every week. She cut a bit of my ear off when I was about seven. I was just sitting in the chair and I felt something warm running down my face. I said to her that she'd cut my ear, and she gave me a slap on the head and said it was my own fault for shaking. I told her it was her fault for being scissor-happy and cutting our every hair every single week. I still have the scar on my ear where she cut me.
69. When I was about nine or ten and was sleeping up on the top floor, the matron came to my bed one night and pulled down the blankets and pyjamas



and starting touching me down below. She said to me that I liked it and I told her that I really didn't know what she meant. I said to her that it wasn't nice and that I didn't want her to do it. She touched me several times and then eventually she stopped, probably because I said I didn't want her to do it. I wasn't old enough to feel anything sexually and I wasn't old enough to understand what she was doing. The thing is, because you were treated like that you automatically felt that you had done something wrong.

70. When I look back now as an adult, I think the matron had a split personality. I found that when a visitor came she'd be very nice and she'd speak very posh, but her personality changed as soon as the door was shut. I feel that she should not have been in charge of a children's home.

Reporting of abuse at Lagarie

71. I told my dad one time when he visited about how the matron was treating us, but he didn't speak to her or do anything about it. He didn't say anything when I told him. He might have felt a bit ashamed. It was just the way it was in those days. My gran and my dad didn't talk to us about how we were getting on in Lagarie. Children were to be seen and not heard. If an adult came into the room, you had to leave the room. That's the way children were treated in those days.
72. I couldn't understand why the other staff never stuck up for us or reported it. It happened all the time so they must have known about it. You'd have to be blind not to see it. They must have heard the screaming as well. [REDACTED] and the cook were very nice. [REDACTED] was very caring towards us and we trusted her. She would give us a sweetie every now and then and we'd always go to her if we were crying.

Leaving Lagarie



73. I don't remember exactly how old I was when my granny took the four of us out of Lagarie. I think I was about fourteen. I don't know why we were taken out. Maybe it was just because we were older. I don't remember finding out that we were leaving Lagarie. I just know that we went to live in my granny's council house in Cardonald.

Life after being in Lagarie

74. My dad sometimes lived with my gran and sometimes he'd be up at Fort William working. I met some other members of my family, a cousin, who came to live with us, and aunts and an uncle, but I only saw them about once or twice and never saw them again.
75. My gran was abusive to my twin and I remember [REDACTED] slapped her back one time when my gran hit her. I remember trying to explain to my gran that [REDACTED] wasn't bad or wicked, it was because we had already gone through enough in Lagarie. I was stronger than [REDACTED] and I managed to contain my feelings.
76. I went to Penilee Secondary School for a short while. I remember I came home one day from school, about a month or two after we had moved in with my granny, and my twin wasn't there. When I asked where she was, my granny said, "She is the bad one. She has gone to a mental home".
77. A couple of days later, my granny put me and my brother in a van and told us we were going to the council for new clothing. She then dropped me off at a home in either Greenock or Gourrock and then took [REDACTED] away, and I don't know where he went. She kept my sister [REDACTED] at home with her because she was old enough to work.
78. I don't know the name of the home I went to. I wasn't there for long. I didn't want to be separated from my family [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later [REDACTED]

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

I got picked up by the police and was taken to Paisley Police Station and I heard my twin's voice next door. I shouted, "Is that you, [REDACTED]?" and she said yes. She said that she had run away to find me. I then told the policeman that my twin, who I hadn't seen for a long time, was there and asked if I could see her. He said no and I didn't see her again for about thirty-five years. I find this very upsetting.

79. I got sent to a reformatory [REDACTED] I don't remember the name of the place. It wasn't far from Helensburgh. I don't know what age I was. I find it very hard to remember how old I was when I was in the different places. [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]. I think I was there for a couple of years. [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED] I was sent to a borstal for a couple of years. The advice I got at the borstal was along the lines of 'If they say kiss the floor, just do it. Do what you have to do and you'll get out'. I did that and then I got out.
80. After that, I got some live-in jobs in the south of England. One was in a home for handicapped children and the other was in a home for people with epilepsy. Every job I got had to be live-in because I didn't have anywhere else to live.
81. I then got a job in a hotel in England which was near a naval base. I started going out with my now husband, [REDACTED], who was in the Royal Navy. His mum invited me to move in with her when I took ill with food poisoning, so I went to live with her. I got engaged to [REDACTED] when I was about nineteen and we got married when I was twenty-one.
82. My daughter [REDACTED] was born in England in 1973. There are naval quarters between Lagarie and Helensburgh and I ended up living there for a little while when [REDACTED] was only one. I remember she was poorly and I took her to the doctor and it was Dr Campbell we saw. I told him my maiden name and he



said that he remembered me and my twin. He said, jokingly, that we had caused him a lot of trouble.

83. [REDACTED] wanted to go to South Africa to live and I agreed to go because I didn't know where any of my family was and felt that I had nothing to lose. We went to South Africa in April 1976 and my other daughter, [REDACTED], was born there in 1977. If I knew then what I know now, I would never have left Scotland. But I was young and innocent and had no family around me, so I went.

Impact

84. My time in Lagarie has affected me badly. It has never left me. These things don't just go away. If I ever wrote a book about Lagarie, I would call it 'A Stolen Childhood'. That's how I feel about it.
85. I didn't focus on my childhood once I got married and had my children. You don't forget, but you have to be strong and move on with your life. I never really spoke about it. I felt it was my burden to keep. I told my husband little bits over the years but he didn't give a damn. Keeping it to myself and not being able to speak to somebody was difficult. I used to share small amounts of information with my children when they were little because I couldn't share it with my husband, but I would quickly realise that that was inappropriate and I would change the subject. My way of dealing with it was to write it all down and then I ripped it up and put it in the bucket. It took me about thirty-five years to be able to do that.
86. Unfortunately, my husband is also terribly abusive to me. My husband [REDACTED]'s father was very nice but [REDACTED] took after his mum. I remember the day I was getting married she was helping me with the zip on my dress and I asked her to be careful with it. She said to me, "Shut up, you nasty bitch". I remember thinking, "What the hell do I do now?", but I had known [REDACTED] for years and I



did love him and he wasn't like that then, so I thought that I just had to go through with it.

87. My husband belittles me all the time. He thinks I'm an idiot. I've often asked myself what I did to deserve it. Unfortunately, at my age it doesn't pay for me to leave him. I just have to live with it. I don't get a pension from the South African Navy. My daughter [REDACTED] says that because of my childhood I don't identify with my full rights and my ability to leave my husband. She says I don't have a clear understanding of my own self-worth. The thing is when you're in a strange country you don't know anybody. And I don't believe in divorce. I went to church and gave my oath to God. I believe that life is what you make it and you just have to get on with it.
88. I think being in Lagarie had an impact on my education as well. We didn't get any help with schooling in the home. There was no extra tutoring at home if you had a problem with spelling or anything like that. I don't think [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] can read or write. That should have been detected by the matron. Not being able to read or write is a real disability in life. It's embarrassing, really.
89. From a very young age I wanted to go into nursing, but nobody guided me or supported me to do that. There was no nurturing in any of the homes. It was just survival. I ended up working in a retirement home for about thirty-five years and I loved it. I'm sure I could have been a nursing sister. I cared for the old people as if I was caring for myself. I believe that you must treat somebody how you want to be treated yourself. That's how it should have been in the children's home.
90. I'm scared of going into water and can't swim because of what the matron did to me when she was giving me a bath.
91. I have never been to see a counsellor to talk about my experiences in Lagarie. The only person I've managed to speak to is my daughter [REDACTED]. I trust her one hundred per cent and she has been understanding with me. She



has been amazing. I've got my faith as well. Not that I'm holier than thou, but I do have strong faith and I speak to the Lord.

92. I feel that I have done extremely well and I have enjoyed my life. I have accepted things. I have two beautiful children and two beautiful grandchildren. My girls are married and they're happy. That makes me feel that I've done something good. I'm happy if my children are happy. I'm proud of what I have achieved. I feel that I've done the best I could with my life, considering what I went through in childhood.

Relationships with family

93. I never saw my dad again after I went to South Africa. I found out in 2002 when I got in touch with my brother that my dad had died. I have come to terms with my mum leaving us. You eventually have to accept it. I don't judge her because I know don't what the circumstances were. Only God can judge her. I admire my dad for supporting us and coming to visit us in Lagarie.
94. I didn't have any contact with my siblings after I left my gran's. I didn't know where they were. I think my twin went to Lennox Castle. I remember I managed to find her once and I visited her. I remember going on a bus to see her. I don't know what it is about identical twins, but you just seem to find your way to each other. You should never separate identical twins. I lost touch with all of my family. When I was first married, I didn't think about trying to find my siblings because I was just trying to find my feet as a wife and mother so I just got on with my life.
95. Later on, I tried to trace my family but I couldn't find them. I used to pray to the Lord to help me find them. I feel that if you give something to the Lord and don't keep asking, what you've prayed for will happen. My daughter [REDACTED] came to Scotland to live when she was twenty-eight and I asked her to write to the births, deaths and marriages office to try and get information about my mum and dad. She managed to get information on when my mum and dad



got married. She then put an advert in a newspaper and that's how she found my brother [REDACTED]. She also found [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I came over to Scotland in 2002 and met up with my brother, and then I met my sisters. The stupid thing is that when I was living in England, I lived very close to my sisters but I didn't know that. Seemingly my twin had written a letter to my mother-in-law but she didn't give me it or tell me about it. I don't know why.

96. [REDACTED]'s family hired a hall and we had a big celebration. [REDACTED] can't talk about his time in Lagarie or the other home he went to afterwards, which I think was a boys' school. He comes on the phone to me now and says he loves me, but that's as far as it goes. I understand that. What we did manage to do together was go to Lagarie, which had been made into flats, and we sat on a chair outside. It was just our way of trying to find some peace, get closure so to speak.
97. When I met up with [REDACTED], she blamed me for what happened to [REDACTED]. I found this upsetting. I told her that I also had bad in my life and it wasn't my fault what happened to [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] had also been in an abusive marriage and had fled and become a recluse. She lived near [REDACTED] and she used to do all her shopping and other errands. [REDACTED] was found dead in her house shortly after I got back to South Africa. She had a lot of health problems, but she was found with several fractures so there was a murder investigation.
98. I found out some more information about my mother when I met up with [REDACTED]. She told me that my mother had got her out of the mental home. My mother had remarried by then and had about five more kids. [REDACTED] said that my mother had only taken her out so she could look after her other children. [REDACTED] didn't like my mother's new husband and didn't want to look after the kids, so she left.
99. Unfortunately, [REDACTED] and I don't have a very good relationship. I went to visit her about two years ago and she belittled me in front of her friends and was nasty and aggressive to me. She said she blames me for everything that



happened to her. I told her it wasn't my fault and I had to get on with my own life, and she threatened to phone the police to come and fetch me. She then made me leave her home. I ended up stranded in a strange place in the early hours of the morning. It was terribly stressful. When I got back to South Africa, I phoned her and told her that I forgave her, but I wouldn't be phoning her again. It took her two years to contact me and apologise.

100. I don't know why both my sisters blamed me for what happened to [REDACTED]. I wasn't responsible for [REDACTED], but I can understand why she has so much hatred in her. I know she was affected badly by her time in Lagarie. I think that's why she went into a mental home. She still hates the matron to this day.

Records

101. I wrote to the Sailors' Society in 2002 telling them what happened to me in Lagarie. I thought it might help other children if the authorities knew about it. They wrote back saying that the matron was dead and would have to answer to God. They referred to the abuse in their letter as "so-called" abuse. I was very annoyed at that. I wrote back saying that it wasn't "so-called", it was actual abuse. I felt they were saying that I was making it up. I swear on my life it's true.
102. They were able to confirm that I had been a child in Lagarie, but they said that they had no records other than information on my primary schooling. I feel sad that I have very little information about my family or me as a child, and I don't have any childhood pictures of me or my brother and sisters. They had a little box for people to donate money to the Sailors' Society, but they never used it to pay for photographs of us as children.

Other action taken

103. A firm of lawyers, Thompsons, contacted me about seeking compensation. I think the Sailors' Society put them in touch with me. That was in 2016. I spoke



to them about it but I'm not doing this for money. I have now decided not to go ahead with it. I have told them to close the file.

104. I am going to report the abuse to the police next week when I'm in Aberdeen.

Lessons to be learned

105. The reason I'm speaking to the Inquiry is to help to make sure that what happened in Lagarie never happens to another child. I am also hoping that it helps bring closure for me. You can be as strong as you like, but it is a big burden to carry in life and talking about it will hopefully bring me closure.

106. I think when children go into a home there should be someone whose job it is to come in and talk to them about how they are feeling and how they are being treated. I just wish that somebody had taken notice of us in Lagarie. Nobody came in to see how we were being treated or talk to us about how we were feeling, or ask us if we were being abused or if we were scared. It's like you were a number in a file. The matron could treat us however she wanted. She had so much control over us. When I think back now, I'm sure she was crazed by power. Even when I left Lagarie and was sent to the reformatory, nobody asked me what had happened to me.

107. I think that the people looking after children in a children's home should nurture and help them to achieve what they want to do when they grow up. I received no guidance through my time in care to help me to do that.

108. Another thing that's really important is that children should learn about the changes that will happen in their body as they grow up. I didn't know about menstruation and thought that it happened because I had done something wrong.



109. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..... PFI [Redacted Signature]

Dated... 3 October 2019