

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PGK [REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is PGK [REDACTED] and I liked to be called PGK [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 1950. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My first memories are from when I was in care. In later years I found out that I had older sisters and they told me that I was born in Glasgow in the house my family stayed in at the time. My dad's name was [REDACTED], but I don't know what my mum's name was.
3. I have three sisters who are [REDACTED], who is two years older than me, and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who are twins and who are one year older than me. [REDACTED] died a couple of years ago.
4. As far as I knew when I was young my mother was dead, nobody told me she was still alive. She just disappeared and I never knew her, I only found out she was still alive when [REDACTED] told me later on she had met her at one point.
5. It was also only later that I found out my sisters and I were all put into care because my father couldn't cope with us. Dad was a slater and a plasterer and worked for a big company and travelled about a bit. Apparently we had been staying with my granny, his mother, because he was also an alcoholic. Eventually he died with the drink.

6. I learned that when I was one year old my sisters and I were taken to the welfare at John Street in Glasgow and from there we were taken to Lagarie House at Rhu. I don't know why we were taken there, but I was at Lagarie until I was about eleven or twelve years old.

Lagarie House, Rhu

7. As far as I know Lagarie was run by the British Sailors' Society. Dad had been a gunner on ships during the war, so perhaps that's why we went there.
8. Lagarie House is in its own grounds at Rhu, just at the border with Helensburgh. A big driveway led from the gate and the gardeners bungalow, which was like a gatehouse. The driveway took you round to the right and then round to the left, before you got to the main building.
9. The building itself was like a big mansion in a half-moon shape with a massive brown door in the middle at the front. When you went inside that door you were in a porch and then you went through another big brown door into the entrance hall.
10. In the hall there was an antique bench like a church pew and on the right there was a cloakroom where we kept our wellies and raincoats. Across from the cloakroom was the diningroom and to the left of that was the nursery. Past the nursery was a set of teak stairs up to the first floor and a long corridor that went past them. As you went along that corridor, the first door you came to was the Matron's sitting room and beside that was her office. There was also a staff room on the ground floor that had bars on the windows. The door into it was always locked.
11. After the Matron's office was a swing door that led to the toilets, the bathrooms and a dispensary. Across from the dispensary was a TV room, although we were never allowed in it much. There was also a playroom there on the right and joined onto the playroom was a sort of greenhouse.

12. Past the dispensary was a door that took you into the kitchen area. In the kitchen was another door into a room where the dishes got washed and also an area where we had lockers and where we kept our wellington boots and raincoats.
13. There was another stair up from the kitchen and past that was a room where they kept all the food and a door that took you into the dining room. After that door a passage took you to the back door, the coal cellar and another wee cloakroom. The back door took you up to the gardener's hut and the gardens.
14. We weren't allowed to go up the main stairs, only the Matron was. All the kids had to go up the back stairs from the kitchen. At the top of the back stairs was a wee cupboard where the vacuum cleaners were kept. Sometimes I used to go in there to hide.
15. There were six dormitories at Lagarie, some for boys and some for girls, none of them were mixed. To the right up the back stairs were two dormitories down a passageway and another room that the Matron used. Past that room was her bedroom and her toilet and another door which led onto the top of the main stairs. On the right there was another dormitory and an arch which led to a bathroom where we all got bathed and another dormitory, where I was when I was a bit older. Along the landing at the top of the main stairs was another set of stairs that led you up to another dormitory that had about ten to fourteen beds in it.
16. There were about sixty to eighty children staying at Lagarie at any one time, ranging in age from babies to twelve years old.
17. The Matron, Anne Millar, was in charge of the place. She was probably in her fifties and she was a pure witch. She put a front on if there were any visitors, but otherwise she was evil and cruel. She was like a 'Jekyll and Hyde' character.
18. If the Matron was ever away somebody would come in and take over being in charge of the place. Things were better when she was away. I can only remember the name of one of the staff that helped out, a lady called Liz, I don't know her second name.

She didn't live at Lagarie, but she did stay overnight as part of her duties. If Liz was on, she was on by herself and she would give us sweeties sometimes. She never shouted or bawled at us, she was a quiet woman.

19. There was a gardener, PXX, who lived in the cottage but I don't know what the rest of the staff were called. All I knew is that they came from outside to work and Matron and the gardener were the only ones that stayed.

Routine at Lagarie House

First day

20. I went into care at Lagarie in 1951 and my first memories are from when I was about five.

Mornings and bedtime

21. At first I was in the nursery just inside the front door and then when I was five or six I was moved into the dormitory up the big teak stairs. There were four beds in that dormitory and the other boys in it were about six or seven years of age. I remember two of them were brothers called and . They were good guys.
22. After that I moved to the dormitory next to the arch and the toilets. I was in there for about a year. The last one I was in was the big one up the windy stairs, which had at least ten beds in it.
23. There were always dim lights on in the corridors so that any of us could go to the toilet during the night if we had to.
24. We were woken in the morning by one of the staff, usually between six and seven o'clock. We would all have to get washed and dressed and make our beds before we went down for breakfast at eight. The staff changed the sheets on our beds every so often, but we had to make them and they were quite strict about how we did that. They

all had to be made in a certain way and now and again they would check we'd made them right.

25. After breakfast we'd have to walk to school and then when we came back from school we'd have to go back to our dormitories and get changed into our play clothes. Once we were changed we'd come back down the stairs and have to do any homework we had in the dining room. We got homework about every second day, but there was never any help with it.
26. After we'd done our homework we could go outside and play if it was decent weather. After that we would get our tea and then we could watch a wee bit of television for half an hour or so before bedtime between eight and nine o'clock. If anyone was too young to get dressed or undressed themselves there would be staff there to help them.
27. Some of the kids managed to sneak comics into the dormitory and hide them under their mattresses. They would read them at night under the sheets with a torch.

Mealtimes/Food

28. Everyone ate all meals in the dining room, even at lunchtime, when we would have to walk back from school. Sometimes we got a packed lunch of an apple and a sandwich for school, but most of the time we had to go back to the home. We only got an hour for lunch so we never had much time to eat.
29. There were tables up both sides of the dining room and a big round table at the window where the Matron sat. If anyone came to visit all the tablecloths and silverware were out, but usually the tables were uncovered.
30. In the corridor leading to the dining room was a hatch into the kitchen and that's where the food was put before it was taken into the dining room. There were people that came in every day to do the cooking.

31. Some of the food we got was alright, but some was absolutely horrible. Breakfast was cornflakes or porridge that was full of lumps, which I refused to eat because it made me sick. I also hated the custard, which we got quite a lot. Tea was toast and beans or potatoes and mince, that sort of thing.
32. If you didn't eat anything it would be waiting for you at the next meal and then the meal after that and Matron would tell you to eat it. If you still didn't eat it she used to send you up to your dormitory and you had to stand at the end of your bed with no clothes on. She would also punish anyone that didn't eat what they were given by putting them in a corner of the dining room and make them stand there facing the wall while everybody else was eating.

Washing/bathing

33. There were two baths in the bathroom and two kids were usually washed at the same time. Once two had been in, another two would go in the same water and then another two, before it would be emptied. If you were the last two in the bath the water would be black and cold. We each had our own towel that we kept at our beds and we'd have to dry ourselves.
34. Matron would sometimes bath us and when she did she used to duck our heads under the water and scrub our heads with carbolic soap. She would hold our heads under the water, even though we would be struggling and trying to scream out.

Clothing/uniform

35. We wore shorts to school and shoes or socks with sandals that the home gave us. I think the home must have had old clothes donated by people, although I don't know. If you did need anything you would get them, but we were never taken shopping to get anything.

36. Matron used to check our shoes once a week to see if the heels were down. I was skinny when I was young, but I was quite heavy on shoes and whenever she looked at my shoes she used to throw them back at me.
37. Eventually I was given a pair of army boots with studs on the bottom and toe caps. That obviously stopped the heels going down and stopped the soles wearing, but it made me feel humiliated when I had to wear them to school. All the other kids would look at me and make comments.

Leisure time

38. About three times a week we were allowed into the playroom to play, but not every day. There were toys in there for us to play with, but we never had our own toys.
39. There was a play area in the grounds outside where there was a brick doll's house. I used to like going outside, but we were only ever allowed out when the Matron told us we could. There was a big rock on the driveway that I used to pretend was a stagecoach.
40. All the kids made the most of it really. We would play football with the balls that were outside and some of the girls had prams and things. I was more interested in the garden and would try do a bit of gardening. I used to draw and try and design different gardens and colour them in.
41. While I was at Lagarie a building was built near the playroom that we used as a more modern playroom. It was called the Inverclyde, which I take was named after Lord Inverclyde, who I think had something to do with the home. Round the back of that were the gardens and round to the left were the woods and the back gate which we went through to get to school.
42. Weekends were much the same, we were outside playing and I would spend time helping out in the garden.

Trips and holidays

43. Sometimes the older children were taken swimming in Paisley or to the open-air baths at the pier in Helensburgh with the school, but that was about it. The only trip we had with the home was when we went to Faslane at Christmas to be shown around a Navy ship. We never went anywhere else and there were no holidays anywhere.

Schooling

44. We had to walk about a mile-and-a-half to the school in Rhu and a mile-and-a-half back. When we got into the village there was a wee cabin that sold sweets and some of the kids used to spend their money in there. The only time we got a bus to school was if there was snow outside. We never wore a uniform, just what we were given in the home.
45. School was alright, although all the other children knew where we came from and I was a wee bit slow. My favourite subjects were technical drawing and joinery work, I wasn't very good at spelling and writing.
46. After I finished at Rhu Primary School, I went to secondary at Hermitage Academy in Helensburgh. I used to get the service bus there with other kids from the home, but I was only there for about nine months before I left Lagarie. After I left the school moved into a brand new building on the outskirts of Dumbarton, but I was never at the new building.

Healthcare

47. Once a week, or maybe once a fortnight, we would all have to go into the dispensary and queue up to be given a big tablespoon of castor oil or syrup of figs by the Matron or whoever else was in charge at the time. We were made to drink it and after we were given it we all had to open our mouths so that they could make sure we had swallowed it.

48. A doctor came to the home every so often to check us over and give us any vaccinations we needed, like measles or whatever. I think her name was Dr Campbell and she was from the local practice.
49. If you were unwell, you would just stay in your bed for a few days and your dinner would be brought up to you. Sometimes the doctor would be called in, it just depended what was wrong with you.
50. I used to be quite bad with warts on my hands and a runny nose and I would get sores around my nose. The Matron used to put iodine on them. It was very painful and the colour of the iodine would make them stand out to the other kids. It was humiliating.

Religious instruction

51. In front of the school was a big church where we went to Sunday School every week while the Matron went to church. If we were caught talking in church after Sunday School it would get back to the Matron and we'd be in trouble. We'd either be put in a room for a while or she would wallop us on the back of the head.

Work

52. I used to like gardening and would often help out the gardener, PXX. There was a big greenhouse and I would help with the tomatoes or I would do some digging, usually on a Saturday or Sunday morning. The Matron never knew anything about it because I didn't tell her.
53. Sometimes the older children also had to wash the dishes, dry them and put them away and then sweep up afterwards. Everybody had to take turns doing it, although nobody liked doing it.

Birthdays and Christmas

54. The Royal Navy put on a party for all the kids at Christmas and they would take so many of us to the boats at Faslane. I don't know if it was maybe a safety thing that they couldn't take all of us, however Matron chose who got to go. My sisters and I all got to go a couple of times and we all got presents, but as soon as we got off the bus when we arrived back those presents were taken off us. I don't know where they went.
55. There was a big Christmas tree at the front door and another smaller one in the playroom. When we got up in the morning and after we had our breakfast, we would all go to the playroom where pillowcases with each of our names on them were laid out in a circle. We'd all get to open our pillowcase and there would be fruit, sweets and things inside.
56. We would get a Christmas dinner of chicken and afterwards we would all go into the TV room and watch whatever was on.
57. When it was time for us to go to bed, all our presents were taken off us and put away in a cupboard. It was really cruel, because afterwards they would just be handed out to anyone and you never got to keep what you were given. We thought when we were given those presents that they were ours to keep, but they weren't, they all had to be shared.
58. Sometimes a cake was shared out on someone's birthday, but there was never a party or anything like that. If a kid got a present from their family, it was never with them for too long before Matron took it off them.

Visitors

59. Maybe once a month on a Sunday my gran or my dad would come up and visit me and my sisters. We were allowed into Helensburgh with them for about an hour before we had to go back. My granny or my dad used to give us all a half-crown pocket money, which we used to call 'two and a tanner'.

60. As soon as we went back into the home the Matron would ask if we'd been given any money and we had to give it to her. After a while we got wise to that and hid the half-crown in our sock and said we'd only been given some pennies instead of the half crown, or that we'd never got any money at all.
61. People came for the weekend occasionally and would stay over. I think were members of the Matron's family, but we never spoke to them.
62. The only time we got to meet any schoolfriends we had was at school. No kids were allowed to come into Lagarie unless they stayed there.

External Inspections

63. Sometimes people from the authorities came to see how the home was getting run. They never spoke to us though and we couldn't speak to them because the Matron was always there.

Sibling Contact

64. I knew who my sisters were at Lagarie, even though I had been so young when I went in. We were never really allowed to spend time with each other though. Sometimes we were allowed to sit with each other, but a lot of the time the boys and girls were separated.

Running away

65. My twin sisters ran away for a few days and Matron hated us all because of that. When they came back she told them that they would end up in jail for the rest of their lives and that they would never see each other again.
66. When they ran away one was caught by the police in Paisley and the other was caught somewhere else. The police put them in the cells for a wee while to give them a fright

before they were taken back to the home. When they were taken back the Matron battered them. She hated them.

Bed Wetting

67. There were a few kids that had problems wetting their beds. It never happened to me, but if anyone did Matron would rub their faces in it and sometimes they were made to sleep in their wet beds. The sheets would only be changed in the morning. The staff never did that, but if they found someone had wet the bed they would go and tell the Matron and she would come and deal with them.

Abuse at Lagarie House

68. If we ever did anything wrong, even for petty things like swearing or fighting, the matron would hit us with a belt or a slipper, whatever she had to hand. She was probably worst with kids between the ages of five and eight, because she stopped belting the older kids.
69. She wore a nurse's uniform which had an elasticated belt with a buckle and she also used to hit us with that. She always made sure she never left a bruise though. Sometimes she would hit us on the back, sometimes on the backside, but always somewhere it wouldn't be seen.
70. She would take you into her sitting room downstairs next to her office and make you bend over the settee or a chair and hit you three or four times, it depended what you'd done.
71. I was a wee bit boisterous and got hit quite a few times by her. She picked on whoever she wanted and if they didn't do what she told them they would get hit. Matron didn't like my family, especially my twin sisters because they spoke back to her at times and that happened to them once. She had told them to get in the bath, but they couldn't because they were too small to climb in on their own and she still punished them.

72. Another punishment if you'd done something wrong was Matron used to make you go and stand at the bottom of your bed with nothing on. I remember being made to do that when I was in the big dormitory at the top of the wee stairs. I was left standing naked at the end of my bed for a couple of hours and wasn't allowed to move. That happened three or four times to me.
73. I used to struggle against her holding my head under the water when she was bathing me. Sometimes I swore at her and she used to shove the carbolic soap in my mouth and make me bite down on it and tell me it was to clean my mouth out. I saw her doing that to a couple of other kids as well.
74. If anyone was in the garden with Mr PXX and they did anything wrong he would give them a clout on the back of the head. I got on alright with him because I used to help him in the garden and I used to think he was okay until he gave me a clout one time across the back of my head. He had hands like shovels and it was sore.
75. My sister has told me when we were older that she was sexually abused while she was at Lagarie. I don't know who did it and I wasn't aware of it at the time, but she said that someone had touched her private parts. I was never aware of anything like that happening while I was there.

Reporting of abuse at Lagarie House

76. I knew that I couldn't say anything about what the Matron was like because it would just make things worse for me. I think most of the other kids would have felt the same. I was just too scared to say anything to anybody. I didn't think anybody would believe me if I'd told them what the Matron was like.
77. Although Liz was nice and I might have been tempted to tell her what the Matron was like, I never did. I was too scared. I don't know whether she would have known herself how Matron treated us.

Leaving Lagarie House

78. █████ left Lagarie two years before me and █████ and █████ left the year before I did. I knew when they were leaving and we got a chance to say goodbye to each other. I left when I got to eleven years old, around 1961. My gran came and picked me up and I went to stay with her in Cardonald.
79. I started school near where my gran stayed, but I wasn't there very long because I was sent to Gryffe Children's Home at Bridge of Weir. My gran couldn't cope with me because she was working all day and my dad was still drinking.

Gryffe Children's Home, Bridge of Weir

80. It had been Gran's decision for me to go to Gryffe and it was alright there, much better the Lagarie. Gryffe was another mansion house in its own grounds, however it was in the country and we had a bit more freedom there. Bridge of Weir is a nice wee place and the grounds of Gryffe looked right into the tannery.
81. I think there were about fifty boys there between the ages of seven and fifteen. There were no girls. We all slept in dormitories that had three or four beds in them and I stayed in the same dormitory for all my time there.
82. All the staff came from outside and were mostly men who were on shifts looking after us, although I don't remember any of their names. I also don't remember the name of the man in charge, who was elderly and had grey hair and always wore a checked suit and carried a school belt over his shoulders.

Routine at Gryffe Children's Home

83. The daily routine at Gryffe was much the same as at Lagarie, except that I was a bit older and looked after getting myself washed and dressed in the morning. We all had different times for baths every day in the two bathrooms and we bathed by ourselves. We all had a locker beside our beds where we kept our toiletries and personal stuff.

84. We all ate in a round dining room, with four to a table and the food was a lot better. Sometimes we got porridge in the morning, but I never ate it, I had cornflakes instead and I never got punished for not eating the porridge. Sometimes boys were put in a corner if they didn't eat something, but that was it, the staff never forced you to eat anything. If you didn't eat, you didn't get fed.
85. We were allowed to go out and play in the grounds and we played cricket quite a lot. There were woods at Gryffe as well and we used to go and play in them and go for walks in them. We were allowed to join the Scouts and the Boys' Brigade. I was in the Scouts for a wee while and I enjoyed that.
86. It was a bit of a distance to school at Houston Academy, maybe about two miles, and we would either get the bus, or if it was a nice day we would walk. The walk was through the countryside, so I never minded it and one of the staff always went with us.
87. I think my gran came up to see me once while I was at Gryffe, but I don't remember anyone else coming or anyone doing an inspection.
88. I remember we went on a cruise for a school trip on a boat called the 'Dunera'. We went to Lisbon in Portugal and then on to Madeira and other places. There were about twenty or thirty kids on that trip and it was good.

Discipline

89. I think the difference between Lagarie and Gryffe was the person in charge. The man in charge of Gryffe was a nice person, who I respected and who you could sit and talk to. He was responsible for disciplining boys, all the staff did was put you in a corner or sent you to your room. If it was something more serious they would tell the man in charge and he would discipline us in his office, but it was fair and he only punished you if you deserved it. Once you had been punished that was it and it was over.

90. He hit me with his belt once for swearing at somebody and fighting. He hit me six times on the hand, but that was the only time I saw him using his belt, he was a nice person and so was his wife.

Leaving Gryffe Children's Home

91. I think I was at Gryffe for about a year or just over. I left when I was about thirteen and went back to my gran's. I started working while I was still staying with her, when I was fourteen years old.

Life after being in care

92. My first job was in a warehouse, packing paintbrushes and other hardware. Sometimes I would go out in the van delivering to customers. I was in there for a few years, still staying with my Gran, until I was eighteen or nineteen.
93. After that I went to the Parks Department of the Council and then the Cleansing. I've been with the Council ever since, although I'm now retired. I've never been idle.
94. I have been married twice. The first time was for twenty-four years, but the marriage ended because my wife stole all my money to pay off her sister's debts. I have a son who is now forty and a daughter who is a wee bit younger, but I don't see my daughter now because she takes drugs and she took money off me a few years ago. My son is a completely different person. He's a tiler and he's done really well for himself.
95. I have known my second wife [REDACTED] for years and we got married a few years ago. She already had a daughter and her daughter now has children herself who we look after occasionally.
96. I lost contact with my sisters for thirty-odd years. My older sister [REDACTED] came to my gran's once, but that was all. It was only after one of my other sister's daughters put an advert in the paper that we got back in touch with each other again. [REDACTED] now

stays in Kent and I've seen her once, [REDACTED] her twin, stays in South Africa. [REDACTED]'s daughter stays in Edinburgh and she comes over now and again.

Impact

97. To this day I don't like any type of confrontation. If [REDACTED] and I argue about anything I have to go into another room. If anyone starts to argue with me I get all nervous and I don't like hearing anyone shouting at kids. I know that's because of what happened to me at Lagarie when I was young.
98. The boots that Matron gave me in Lagarie were a size too small and to this day my feet are terrible. I've got bad circulation in my feet and I think it's from wearing those boots, although I can't prove it.
99. I've always be doubtful of people and who I talk to. I'm not a person who likes to get involved with other people or who likes to talk to people.
100. Lagarie has been with me all my days and I think about it every day. It's very hard to talk about it, but I know I need to get the monkey off my back. I think I felt ashamed and I thought people wouldn't believe me.

Treatment/support

101. I've never had any counselling or treatment. I've only just started talking about my time at Lagarie to my wife [REDACTED]. She never knew about it before, but it's better now that she does know.

Reporting of Abuse

102. About a year ago I got a letter from the British Sailors' Society telling me the police would be in contact about Lagarie and two months later two officers from Kilmarnock came to the house and took a statement from me. They were with me for about five hours and I told them everything.

103. The police got back in touch with me later by phone and told me that there was not much more they could do because all the people involved were dead.

Records

104. I tried to get my records from Lagarie, but I got a letter back from the British Sailors' Society saying they had no details of me or my sisters having been there. The lady who sent the letter had checked with the school in Rhu though and fortunately they had records. Seemingly the school records said that we had been staying at the home.

Lessons to be Learned/Hopes for the Inquiry

105. I think the people that look after children should be properly vetted by the police and the authorities and checked regularly. When I was at Lagarie there wasn't proper vetting and anybody could get a job. That's when the problems start. I hope that there will be proper vetting after this Inquiry.

106. It would probably have helped if there had been someone I could have talked to, although I would probably have been too scared. There should be people to go round and talk to children and check they are okay. It would be hard for the children to say anything, but there should be someone.

Other information

107. 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... PGK

Dated... 30 6 2021