

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Marjorie Anne MCFARLANE or MYLES

Support person present: No

1. My name is Marjorie Anne Myles. My surname when I was born was McFarlane. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1952 and I am presently sixty-six years of age. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Glasgow and when I was about eighteen months old my parents split up. My mother was [REDACTED] and her maiden name was [REDACTED]. My father was [REDACTED], but I never really had very much contact with him.
3. My father had been in the army and when he left he and my mother moved with me to Danderhall because he got a job in the coal mine. My mother had an affair with one of my father's friends and as a result my father left home.
4. I stayed with my mother for a wee while after that until she took up with another man, [REDACTED]. He didn't want somebody else's child, so I was sent to stay with my grandmother. She had a wee girl with Down's Syndrome though so I was then sent to stay with my mum's sister.
5. I stayed with my mum's sister until my dad found out I was no longer with my mum. He came and took me and I stayed with him and his sister and her husband. My dad's job took him away a lot so his sister was having to look after me. My aunt was finding it too upsetting though because her own daughter had died of polio.

6. As a result, I was put into care at a place called Hilltop in Glasgow. I was four at that time and was in care there for about a year before my aunt asked for me to come back. I went back and stayed with her for a little while until she re-married and her new husband wasn't too keen on me.
7. I was seven by this time and my dad had re-joined the army. He couldn't look after me so my mother took me back to stay with her at Rosewell in Midlothian. I stayed there for two years and my step-father was abusive in every possible way.
8. My mum and step-father had four children together, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was four years younger than me and there was about two years difference in their ages. My step-father was a really horrible man. He was fine with his own children but really nasty with me.
9. I remember one time when I was about eight my mum picked me up to give me a cuddle. He picked up a poker from the fire and put it through her foot. After he did he told my mother that she wouldn't be so keen to pick me up the next time.
10. My step-father had a wood yard and even at that age I had to go and work in the yard for a couple of hours before I went to school. Again in the evening he'd pick me up from school and I had to go and work there.
11. If he had made cakes I hated it. If I ate them too slow I got battered, because he thought I didn't like them. If I ate them too fast I got battered for that as well.
12. One of my teachers at school, Rosewell Primary, noticed some bruises on me and I was taken away by the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and put into Craiglockhart Children's Home in Edinburgh.
13. Craiglockhart was just a stopgap and I wasn't there long before I was taken to Balcary Children's Home in Hawick. I remember Balcary very well, but I don't have

much recollection of Hilltop or Craiglockhart. I can't remember names or much about either place at all.

14. My step brothers and sisters all stayed at home, it was just me that went into care.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Balcary Children's Home, Hawick

26. Balcary House is set in about three acres of grounds and is on three different levels. The front door was red and there were lots of windows.

27. When you walk in the front door of the house there was a hall with a tiled floor and a big rocking horse in it. On the left hand side was a staircase going up. There were various doors leading off the hall to the dining room, the staff room, which had a television in it, and the matron's office. There were also doors to the playroom and another door that led to another part of the house.

28. The lady in charge of Balcary was the matron Miss O'Brien, who we called "Mamma G". She was a source of comfort and a lovely lady. She was in her fifties when I was there and was slim, tall and wore glasses. She had her own flat in the building. I can't remember if she asked us to call her Mamma G, that was just what she was known as.
29. Mamma G always took note of you and would ask if you were feeling ok, if you were unwell or looking a bit tired, or if you were upset about something. She made everybody feel special.
30. There were another four staff who all slept in the house as well. One of them, Bobbi, was the allocated carer for my age group of girls and there was also a lady called Jasmine, who was allocated to the boys of my age group. I didn't know the two carers who looked after the younger ones very well.
31. There were about thirty boys and girls at Balcary ranging in ages from about four or five up. The oldest girl that was there when I left was seventeen.

Routine at Balcary Children's Home

First day

32. I remember arriving at Balcary and seeing this big house. It was a bit scary, but the staff were lovely. I was introduced to the carer that had been assigned to me, Bobbi. She took me upstairs to show me my bedroom and then showed me round the place. I could hear children laughing in the playroom and saw them playing games so I thought it maybe wasn't that bad.
33. I was introduced to one of the girls I was to share a room with, BEQ. She showed me round outside where all the children kept their pets and showed me the grounds.

Mornings and bedtime

34. Boys and girls had separate bedrooms and separate playrooms. I shared a bedroom with three other girls usually, although occasionally there was another girl in with us. There was another bedroom further along that was for older girls and there were only two in it. For most of my time there I shared a room with **BEQ** **BHG** and **BEW**. We all became very friendly.
35. Just off our bedroom was Bobbi our carer's room. She slept there all the time so if we needed her during the night we could knock on her door. The rest of the staff slept in rooms upstairs in the attic. If Bobbi was off duty someone else would come down and sleep in her room.
36. We were woken between seven and seven-thirty in the morning and we would all wash, clean our teeth and dress ourselves. After that we would do any chores we had been allocated, like setting the dining room tables or helping get breakfast ready. We all took turns with the chores.
37. Bedtime depended on your age. I think the younger ones went about half-past seven and about nine o'clock for the older ones. I don't remember there being any difference between summer and winter.

Mealtimes/Food

38. Everybody had their meals together in the dining room. There were various tables that we all sat at, like a proper restaurant. We usually sat in the same place, but we weren't told we had to sit anywhere particularly. In Craiglockhart we all sat at one big table with benches at either side.
39. Most of the time the food was good. It depended what mood the cook, Mrs **[REDACTED]**, was in. She was a very down-to-earth person.

40. If Mrs [REDACTED] was in a good mood on a Saturday or a Sunday, you could ask her if you could make some cakes or biscuits or whatever. It was more like being in a family home than the previous places I had been in.
41. Breakfast was generally porridge or cereal and toast. During term lunch was at school but in the holidays we would have it at the home. In the winter we would often have different soups with bread or rolls and then a main course for lunch. In the summer there would be a small salad and a main course. The evening meal would be two courses as well, but usually a main course and then a pudding.
42. If a child didn't like something they could leave it, but they weren't given anything else. There was no discipline for not eating.
43. Mealtimes were supervised by two members of staff who would come round with cups of tea for the older children. All the children took turns taking water or bread round the tables as well.
44. On a Sunday we had a high tea with scones and jam and roughly once a month children were invited into Mamma G's flat for afternoon tea with her. I liked it, but some children didn't. She would teach us etiquette and table manners. It was a big home so it wasn't possible for someone to do that all the time. If we had any problems that was our time to chat with her personally.

Washing/bathing

45. There were three bathrooms that also had a sink in them and a couple of separate toilets. Boys and girls were separate. We would have a bath about three times a week in the evening. There were no locks on the door so we would just say when we were going to have a bath. When I first went a member of staff would fill it for me, but as I got older I would do it myself.
46. We all had our own wash bag with soap and a toothbrush and things. The toilets also had sinks in them as well and we could use them for cleaning our teeth.

Clothing/uniform

47. We were all given our own clothes to wear, tops, skirts, trousers and shorts in the summer. We kept them all in cupboards in our room. It wasn't like Craiglockhart where we all had to just grab anything out of a cupboard. It was only at school that we had to wear a uniform.
48. Occasionally we would get back to our room and find a new dress there as a surprise. It was lovely. We would just be told we were getting it because one of the staff had seen it and thought we might like it.

School

49. When I first arrived at Balcary I went to Drumlanrig Primary School, which is in Hawick and about a half hour walk away. I left at eleven and went to Hawick High School, which was just down the road, about a ten minute walk away.
50. As there were quite a few children from the home in the schools we were just accepted and we made friends there. When I was at Craiglockhart the children were pointed at and made a fool of. That didn't happen in Hawick.
51. We made friends with the local children and we would go to their houses for tea or they could come to the home. Occasionally we would stay overnight in our friends' houses. They weren't allowed to stay overnight in the home though.
52. The teachers were the same, they treated us just like all the other children. Our English teacher, Miss Taylor, was very good. The P.E. teacher was Bill McLaren, the rugby commentator, he was strict but very good too.
53. I enjoyed school and didn't have any worries there. I remember having trouble with an essay that I had been given for homework. It was taking ages for me to do so Mamma G phoned the school the next day and told them it was far too much for me. She looked out for us all.

54. When we got our school reports Mamma G would take us into her office individually and go through them with us. She was very thorough.

Leisure Time

55. We would usually get back from school about half-past four. When we got in we would get changed and clean our shoes and get ready for our evening meal, which was usually between five and half-past. Then we would do our homework and any chores we might have had. After that we were free to do whatever we wanted.
56. Inside the house there was one big playroom where all ages could play and there was also a boys' playroom and a girls' playroom. Off the big playroom was a quiet room if anyone wanted to just go and sit and read. We were encouraged to use that for homework and studying.
57. There were lots of toys in the playroom as well as a piano, boxes of games and jigsaws. In the quiet room there was just a bookcase, a desk and a sofa.
58. The only television was in the staff room and we were allowed in a couple of times a week to watch the TV. It wasn't encouraged but I do remember watching the 1966 football.
59. Outside we had an area of the gardens that we could play in and climb the trees and there were formal gardens as well. We were encouraged not to go in the formal gardens, although we did occasionally.
60. If there was at least two of us we could go out of the grounds, but we needed to say we were going out. We could go into the town and play in the park or go swimming in the river. If it was winter we weren't allowed to go out in the dark. On a Saturday morning we could go to the cinema. There was lots of freedom.

61. When you got into your teens you were allowed a small pet, a rabbit or a guinea pig or whatever. I had a rabbit and some of the boys used to have rats and snakes. They were kept in the outbuildings and it was our responsibility to look after them.

Pocket money

62. On a Saturday afternoon we got our pocket money, three shillings. One shilling was for saving and we could spend the rest however we wanted, usually on sweets or magazines. We would get the money we saved either before Christmas, or when the fair was on, or when we were going on holiday.

Personal Possessions

63. I didn't have any personal possessions when I arrived, because of the circumstances I had been in. Whatever I got at Craiglockhart had to be returned when I left. It was different at Balcary because whatever you got for Christmas or your birthday was yours.
64. We all had a locker and there was a big wardrobe that we could keep things in. We also all had our own cupboards in the playroom for any toys that we wanted to keep in there.

Birthdays and Christmas

65. Christmas was lovely. On Christmas Eve we sang carols around the tree before we would go into the playroom or the staff room. Then we would hear "Jingle Bells" and a man dressed as Santa Claus would come in and tell us all we had to be good.
66. When we got up in the morning we all had to wait outside the playroom, which was locked. We would bang on the door and shout "why are we waiting", before the door was unlocked and we all went in. Each of us had a pillowcase full of toys. We were allowed to ask for three things, nothing too big, and they would be in the pillowcase along with other things like a new dressing gown, or whatever.

67. Afterwards we would get breakfast and then play with our toys for a while before we all went to church.
68. If it was someone's birthday, there was a birthday tea, cards and a cake and they could invite one of their friends in from outside the home. Staff and our friends would give us presents and there would be a present from Mamma G as well.

Trips/Holidays

69. Some children would go on home visits or go away for a while and then come back, but I never did. One of the girls I was friendly with had a foster mother who lived at Stenhouse in Edinburgh. They were in the process of fostering her and I stayed there with her a couple of times at weekends.
70. If there was a special occasion, for example if it was one of my school friend's birthdays and I was invited, I could go there for a sleepover.
71. We would also go ice skating in Kelso and did various other things in small groups. We were never sent out as one big crocodile line of children anywhere, like at Craiglockhart.
72. Every so often we had special time with our carers and would go away somewhere on our own with them. Bobbi took me to several places, including Melrose Abbey.
73. For a holiday, we swapped with Dr Barnardo's in North Berwick, so we could be by the sea and they could be in the country. Everyone went, including Mamma G and the rest of the staff. We would go down on the beach and in the parks and we were taken to see different places round about. One time we sailed round the Bass Rock.

Religion

74. The only day there was a set routine was a Sunday. We had prayers and church in the morning and then a walk in the afternoon and bible study with Mamma G in the evening. Before every meal we would always say Grace.
75. Bible study was relaxed although we had to be there, it wasn't optional. We could talk about stories in the bible and ask questions. We were encouraged to talk and pray about anything we were worried about.
76. I don't know what would have happened if anybody wasn't Church of Scotland. I wasn't aware of anybody going to Catholic school.

Visits/Inspections/Review of Detention

77. I never had any visitors, but some of the other children had uncles and aunts that came and took them out for the day. Some of the children were fostered out and while they were going through the process their foster parents who would come and take them away for the weekend.
78. If any child wanted to speak to their visitors on their own they could go into the quiet room or the staff office. There was no visitors' room as such.
79. I don't remember a social worker coming to visit at all or there being any inspections. Occasionally we were told to be more thorough in the cleaning because somebody was coming, but I don't know who that might have been.

Healthcare

80. A local doctor came every Saturday to Balcarry to see if there was any problems with any of the children. He could also be called out at other times for any emergencies. One time I had a problem with my ear and they got the doctor in to have a look. I

can't remember what the problem was, but I had to go to the local cottage hospital which was right next door.

81. We also went to the local dentist for regular check-ups.

Chores

82. We had various chores to do, but nothing too much. Compared to previous places I had been in it was much easier. We might have to sweep and polish the hall or set the dining room tables.

Bed Wetting

83. None of the girls in my room wet the bed, although I know that some of the younger ones did. I don't think it was a big problem.

Discipline

84. Occasionally my friends and I would be a bit naughty. We might steal some things from the kitchen or go and meet boys in the park. One time BEQ BHG and I had taken some apples from the local convent and were selling them at school for a penny each. We got caught and the local priest came along and told us we had the faces of angels and the hearts of devils.
85. If you were in trouble you would get extra chores to do or you would be confined to a room and told to read the bible. Sometimes pocket money was stopped. One of the chores might be preparing extra vegetables and when there are thirty children that can be a lot of work. If you were really naughty, the worst chore you could get was to clean the cooker. It was huge. The worst punishment was getting your pocket money stopped.

86. There was never any physical punishment at all. I don't think any child ever didn't do their extra chores. We just accepted the punishment because we had respect for Mamma G.

Leaving Balcary Children's Home

87. I left Balcary in 1967. In the March before my fifteenth birthday, my mother contacted me and told me that they really wanted me home and asked if I would consider coming home.
88. Mamma G had retired just a short time before through ill health and by that time the people in charge were a Mr and Mrs Barron. They told me that everything had been set up for me to stay for another year so that I could then go on to be a nurse cadet. Dr Barnardo's had set up my future and set up what I was going to do. Mr and Mrs Barron told me that if I went home I might not get that and they didn't think I should go home for that reason.
89. I did leave and went home to Rosewell because my mother said I could still become a nurse cadet. When I got home however, I was told that I couldn't because they couldn't afford it. Instead I had to go out and get a job. It was just a ploy to bring extra wages into the house.
90. It was okay living at home for the first few months. In fact ^{BEQ} and ^{BHG} actually came and stayed with me on different weekends. They were made very welcome, but then things went back to how they had been when I was younger. My step-father was just the same horrible man once again.
91. I got a job in Woolworths on Princes Street in Edinburgh. I was only given so much money, so I had to walk to work from Rosewell and get the bus home.
92. After a while we all moved down to Darwin in Lancashire. I was still fifteen at the time and got a job in a factory there.

Life after being in care

93. I first left home when I was sixteen, although I went back after a while. I left more or less permanently when I was nineteen to go and work as a nanny in London.
94. I thoroughly enjoyed being a nanny and stayed in London for about eighteen months. After that I went back up north and worked for a family who lived in Cheshire. I enjoyed it there too, but they decided to move to South Africa and I didn't like the regime there so I went back to my mum when I was twenty-two.
95. By that time my mum and step-father were divorced so I was happier to go back. I got another job in a local factory doing quality control and stayed for about nine months.
96. I met my husband [REDACTED] because his eldest daughter used to do errands for my mum. He had been in the army when his wife left, leaving him with their five children. As a result, he had to resign from the army to look after the children.
97. We were married in 1979 and I became his children's step-mother. We stayed in England for a few years and then moved back up to Edinburgh. We've been together for forty-four years now.
98. I went to night school and trained to become a nurse when I felt the children were old enough. I got the required qualifications and retired as a staff nurse four years ago after thirty-three years.
99. After retiring I worked in the local community as a carer for a while. I have ten grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren and most of them still live fairly locally so I see them a lot.

Impact

100. Dr Barnardo's was a positive experience for me. I am a very patient person, I think that's because I was brought up with so many other children. My friends tell me I'm just as sensible now as I was then. I've always felt responsible for other people.
101. I don't like massages and I'm not a tactile person, which is possibly because of what happened to me before I went into care. We didn't have much physical contact in Balcary. It was a lovely atmosphere there, but there was nobody you could go to for a cuddle. Mamma G was an amazing person and a positive inspiration, but you couldn't go and sit on her knee. Everything always had to be very correct and proper. I think I never associated physical contact with being pleasant.
102. I accept people as they are, because I don't know what their stories are. I'm not a judgemental person.

Records

103. I have written to get my records from Dr Barnardo's in London twice, but then something happened in between and I didn't pursue it. I've never actually seen them, but I would be interested to.

Lessons to be Learned

104. Mamma G was very encouraging and inspiring. She was always there for you and you felt as though you were special, even though there were so many children. That is very important, particularly for a child.
105. When I left I knew where I was going, but I know that my friend BEQ was just put in a bedsit in Edinburgh and a job was found for her. She has told me that she felt she was being thrown out and there was no follow-up care.

106. I think there needs to be more aftercare for children when they leave. I had no information on how to manage money and budget when I left. There should be interim measures when children leave. They should be introduced to someone from outwith where they are staying, six months before they are due to leave. That person should guide them through the process of leaving, life outwith and how to cope with the different responsibilities. That person should then be there for the child to contact for any help and support after they leave.

Other information

107. I'm still in contact with my step-brothers and sisters. I have very good relationships with them. They know that there were problems but they don't really know the whole background. They knew not to play with me in front of my step-father, but they didn't know the extent of the abuse.

108. My father had a heart attack and died about fifteen years ago. My step-father died about ten years ago and my mum died about eighteen months ago.

109. I've been back to Balcary quite a few times. There was a reunion two years ago and there's another one next year. I'm in touch with nine of the people I was there with through 'Facebook'.

110. 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.. 

Dated..... 17th August 2018