I was raped aged 4 by top aide to Thatcher: Woman claims she was abused by senior Conservative MP who visited notorious guest house with paedophile Cyril Smith

- Susie Henderson, 48, says she was raped by Sir Nicholas Fairbairn
- Tory politician was solicitor general for Scotland, and Perth and Ross MP
- MP died in 1995, aged 61, and was a favourite of Margaret Thatcher
- Miss Henderson says she was abused by late father, a prominent QC
- New evidence suggests Fairbairn visited Elm Guest House
- Property is the focus of investigation into alleged paedophile ring in 1980s

By EMMA COWING and GRAHAM GRANT FOR MAILONLINE
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A woman last night claimed she was raped at the age of four by a senior Tory MP who was one of Margaret Thatcher’s closest allies.

Susie Henderson waived her right to anonymity to describe the appalling abuse she alleges was inflicted on her by Sir Nicholas Fairbairn.

The late Conservative politician, who was appointed solicitor general for Scotland by Mrs Thatcher when she became prime minister, has been linked to the child abuse scandal threatening to engulf Westminster.

Last month evidence came to light which suggests Sir Nicholas may have visited the Elm Guest House which serial abuser Cyril Smith attended. The property in Barnes, south-west London, is the focus of a Scotland Yard investigation into an alleged Establishment paedophile ring in the 1980s.

The evidence emerged weeks after Home Secretary Theresa May announced a Hillsborough-style inquiry into claims of paedophile activities in Parliament and other public institutions.

Now, Miss Henderson, 48, has told the Mail that she was raped as a young child by Sir Nicholas – and that she also suffered years of sexual assaults by her late father, prominent Scottish QC Robert Henderson, who was a friend of the MP.

She said of Sir Nicholas: ‘I hated that man,’ adding: ‘More than I hated my father. He just really wasn’t a nice man.

‘I want it acknowledged that my father and Fairbairn did something very evil. Not just to me. There are other children out there.’ Miss Henderson first made her allegations against Sir Nicholas – famous for his outspoken views, frock-coat suits and tartan trousers – and her father under the alias of ‘Julie X’ in 2000 but an initial police investigation did not lead to any charges.
Sir Nicholas, flamboyant MP for Perth and Kinross, died in 1995, aged 61. Twice-married, he once described his pastimes as: ‘Making love, ends meet and people laugh.’

The MP from 1974 to 1995 was a favourite of Mrs Thatcher because of his right-wing views and his noisily expressed adoration of her. He once claimed to enjoy a ‘special chemistry’ with the former Prime Minister and wrote in The Spectator magazine about her: ‘Sexually attractive, no, but certainly bonny.’ Miss Henderson, whose father died in 2012 aged 75, claims Sir Nicholas first abused her at one of her father’s parties at his Edinburgh home. She said: ‘We were in the kitchen. I was maybe four years old, I could have been younger.

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‘I had a skirt on and Nicholas and my dad had been drinking, and my dad told me to sit on Nicholas’s knee. I sat on his knee and he put his hand up my skirt and abused
me. My dad just stood there laughing.’

Recalling another incident, Miss Henderson, who lives near Inverness, claimed Sir Nicholas raped her when she was in bed with him and ‘another guy’ in a guest room on the top floor of her five-storey family home.

She says she was just four or five years old at the time, and remembers the pungent smell of his feet. Sobbing, she said she was not sure how many times Sir Nicholas abused her but says it was ‘a lot,’ adding: ‘Even once is too much.’ Last night Sir Nicholas’s daughter Charlotte, 50, told the Mail that while she ‘did not know’ whether her father had carried out the alleged abuse, she very much doubted it. She said: ‘I don’t really want to know anything about it, I would be very surprised by that [the claims made against her father], but he is dead. He’s not here to defend himself.

‘It would sound hollow if I said, “He’s innocent.” I don’t know, though I completely and utterly doubt it [that he was an abuser.] It’s all such a long time ago. I hope it’s not true.’

Lists of VIP visitors to the Elm Guest House – which hosted parties in the 1980s where it is alleged vulnerable boys were sexually assaulted – are now being used by police as evidence in their inquiry, Operation Fernbridge. One document states politicians including ‘N Fairburn’ and C Smith’ visited the property in June 1982.

They also state ‘Fairburn’ had ‘used boys in sauna’ and photos had been taken of him – as well as former Liberal MP Smith – at the guest house. Police have confirmed that Smith was a regular visitor to the address.

Last month broadcaster Esther Rantzen spoke of her revulsion after learning Sir Nicholas, with whom she had an affair after they met in a BBC studio in 1966, had been implicated in the scandal.

Miss Henderson, speaking publicly after Sir Nicholas was linked to the guest house, said: ‘I knew this would come out.'
‘I’m only surprised it has taken so long. I told the police about him in 2000, I told them what Fairbairn was. But they just wanted me to go away.

My father was feted by legal establishment, but was really a monster who let his powerful friends rape me

Every night before five-year-old Susie Henderson went to sleep, she would arrange her dolls around her bed. She wasn’t playing, she was hiding. Four decades on, it is a memory that still haunts her.

‘I put them there thinking that, when my father came for me in the night, he wouldn’t know it was me and he would take one of my dolls instead,’ she says. ‘But he never did.’

Now 48, Miss Henderson has spent a lifetime in hiding. For the past 14 years she has been known only as ‘Julie X’, the anonymous woman who in 2000 made allegations of child sexual abuse against her father – a senior member of the legal profession –
and MP Sir Nicholas Fairbairn, the former Solicitor General for Scotland and a member of Margaret Thatcher’s inner circle.

Channel 4's Dispatches uncover Cyril Smith's dark past
Speaking out: Miss Henderson has spent a lifetime in hiding, and for the past 14 years has been known only as 'Julue X', the anonymous woman who in 2000 made allegations of child sexual abuse against her father and Sir Nicholas.

Today, Miss Henderson has waived her anonymity to detail the abuse she suffered at the hands of her father, the late Robert Henderson QC, one of Scotland’s top advocates and a close friend and former colleague of Fairbairn. Henderson died in December 2012, Fairbairn in 1995.

In the wake of the paedophile scandal threatening to engulf Westminster in which Fairbairn was recently implicated, Miss Henderson has chosen to come forward to tell her story.

She is calling for the police investigation into Henderson and Fairbairn, which was halted in 2000 after details were leaked to the Press and evidence was mislaid, to be re-opened.

She has also given the Scottish Daily Mail the names of six other senior members of the Scottish legal profession who she alleges either abused her or were aware of the abuse, which took place in the 1970s. Two of these individuals are still alive.

Today Miss Henderson lives a quiet life near Inverness with her partner, who fully supports her decision to tell her story, saying: ‘Over the years, Susie has lived in fear – but once other stories about Fairbairn started to come out, we realised that she could finally do this without fear. She can get closure.’
Catalogue of crimes: Miss Henderson says her father (left) and Sir Nicholas (right) abused her as a child

Miss Henderson works in social care, has a grown-up son and at weekends walks her dog along the windswept beaches near her home. She is well-spoken and articulate, with a ready smile and a mischievous sense of humour.

Yet her life is still overshadowed by the monstrous actions of her father and his friends – a set of high-powered legal figures who, she says, ritually abused her as part of an organised paedophile ring in the early 1970s when she was between four and eight years old.

‘It’s really only in my 40s that I’ve started living my life,’ she says. ‘I have good days and I have bad days. It will never go away and I get horrendous nightmares at times but, because my father is dead now, I’m not as scared as I used to be.’

Miss Henderson was born in 1966 into a life of Edinburgh privilege. Her father and his first wife, her mother, lived in a five-storey Georgian townhouse in the New Town. Parties were common and Henderson, a rising star in the Scottish legal profession, was a flamboyant and charming man-about-town.

But behind closed doors he was a monster. He often beat his wife and young Susie was regularly belted: ‘He threw my Mum and me out in the snow one night when he brought a woman home. ‘He used to jump out of wardrobes to frighten people. He drank very heavily. There were always people round at the house and my Mum was just the slave.’

Henderson could be sadistically cruel towards his family. His daughter recalls: ‘One time he came home unexpectedly and I had my pet hamster out. I wasn’t allowed to have it out when he was there and I was terrified he’d go crazy. But he didn’t do anything, he just said: “Put that away.”’

‘The next morning when I went downstairs, it was stuffed into a milk bottle. He’d killed it. That was my punishment for letting it out.’

Yet Henderson could also be urbane and charismatic. Well thought-of among the political establishment, he twice stood as a Tory candidate for Parliament during the 1970s in Inverness-shire.

‘He could be very charming, usually when drunk,’ says Miss Henderson. ‘I can’t remember him being a loving man but he could be quite nice. He wasn’t always horrible.’
She believes her father started abusing her around the age of three and sexually abused her repeatedly until she was eight years old: ‘He would say to my Mum when he came back from the pub, “I’ll take Susie for a nap.” And that was when he’d do it. He always put a pillow over my head. Another time in the bath he abused me and put my head under the water.’

The house was often full of people, her father’s friends, who she says also abused her, or were fully aware of what was going on: ‘I was told that whatever anybody wanted I was to do it, no matter what it was.

‘My father had parties where I had to dance for people. He’d then put me in a bedroom. People came in. They had drugs there, lots of drink. My Dad used to give me drink.’

She clearly remembers the first time Fairbairn abused her at one of her father’s parties: ‘We were in the kitchen. I was maybe four years old. I had a skirt on and Nicholas and my Dad had been drinking, and my Dad told me to sit on Nicholas’s knee. I sat on his knee and he put his hand up my skirt and abused me. My Dad just stood there laughing.’

She remembers another incident involving Fairbairn: ‘The house was five floors and the top floor was where the guests used to stay. I was in bed in the guest room with Fairbairn and another guy.’

She alleges that on this occasion Fairbairn raped her. She was just four or five years old. Today, she sobs quietly as she recalls the incident and details such as the pungent smell of Fairbairn’s feet: ‘I hated that man – more than I hated my father. He just really wasn’t a nice man.’ She is not sure how many times Fairbairn
abused her but says it was ‘a lot’, adding: ‘Even once is too much.’

Last month, Fairbairn was named as one of those believed to have visited the notorious Elm Guest House in London. A handwritten list of visitors to the guest house – which hosted parties in the 1980s where vulnerable boys were sexually assaulted after being plied with alcohol – states that a number of politicians including ‘N Fairburn’ and ‘C Smith’ – visited the property on June 7, 1982.

‘C Smith’ is believed to be Cyril Smith, the Liberal MP who has been exposed as a serial paedophile and who police have confirmed was a regular visitor to the brothel.

The documents also state that ‘Fairburn’ had ‘used boys in sauna’ and that photographs had been taken of him at the guest house. Despite the spelling discrepancy over Fairbairn/Fairburn, there have now been calls for a full investigation to establish whether or not Fairbairn was involved. Miss Henderson says she is not surprised: ‘I knew this would come out. I’m only surprised it has taken so long. I told the police about him in 2000, I told them what Fairbairn was. But they just wanted me to go away.’

The regular abuse stopped when she was eight years old and her mother left Henderson, taking Miss Henderson with her. It continued sporadically until she was around 12, whenever Henderson had custody of her.

‘Occasionally I would go and stay at my father’s,’ she says. ‘We never went to the pictures or did anything normal as father and daughter.

‘There were parties and drink and drugs and people half-naked. I remember him taking me to a sauna one time. Another time, he took me to a judge’s house and left me there.’

Miss Henderson knows that parts of her story may sound unbelievable: ‘Who would believe that the solicitor general and other top lawyers would be abusing children? Especially back in the 1970s and early 1980s. Those kind of things weren’t talked about.’

She kept in touch with her father during her teenage years – a decision which might seem incomprehensible.
‘I always wanted his approval,’ she says quietly. ‘I always wanted him to love me. I had this vision of what I wanted him to be. All my friends had nice Dads.

‘And, as I said, he could be really, really charming. But when he was angry or drunk he was something totally different.’

Those questioning why Henderson was not brought to justice while he was alive may remember the Fettesgate scandal of the 1990s, when it was alleged that a magic circle of legal figures was conspiring to fix sentences. The case was eventually thrown out of court.

Miss Henderson says: ‘With the Fettesgate scandal, my father had a list of all the prominent people involved and he used to just laugh. He would say, “If I go down, they’ll all go down with me.”

‘He had all this evidence. He showed me. He just thought it was all hysterical. He knew he would take the whole lot of them with him. That’s why it was all hush-hushed.’

‘He told me he could put me six feet under’
And so it was that in 2000, having agreed to speak anonymously about her experiences to Sandra Brown, author of a book about child abuse called Where There is Evil, she found her story greeted with scepticism.

Senior Tories rallied to Fairbairn’s defence, describing her allegations as ‘absolute rubbish’.

Fairbairn’s daughter Charlotte dismissed the claims. Henderson, by then retired but still a prominent member of the legal establishment, phoned his daughter and warned her not to continue making allegations.

‘He told me he could put me six feet under,’ says Miss Henderson, whose claims were investigated by the police. They interviewed both her and her mother, who supported her daughter’s claims.

But following a mysterious leak to the Press and the loss of evidence, Miss Henderson halted the investigation. She explains now that the police had ‘told me nobody would know until the investigation was over, but I was only half-way through my statement when it was leaked.

‘To have that happen to you, when it had taken me years to get to the point where I felt it was time for justice, was devastating. I was just a whimpering mess. I couldn’t go on.’

At the time, she handed a number of key pieces of evidence to police. She asked for their return several times over the years but was always told they were in a ‘safe’ place. Recently she was told that they had been ‘mislaid’.
‘I want answers for that,’ she says. ‘I want my stuff back. And I want it acknowledged that my father and Fairbairn did something very evil. Not just to me. There are other children out there.

‘And these were people in power. We put them there and they are supposed to be trusted. It’s not right.’

Miss Henderson has lived with the scars, physical and mental, of the abuse all her life. As a teenager she developed an eating disorder. Following the birth of her son in her twenties, she suffered debilitating post-natal depression that caused many memories of those terrible times to come flooding back.

Eventually, she spent time in a psychiatric unit. Today, however, she feels that finally people will understand that she is telling the truth about Fairbairn: ‘I know – I hope – I will be believed.

‘He used to pay me money for it,’ she adds. ‘A pound here, a pound there. It was as if it was his way of thinking it was OK, because he’d paid for it.’

And like many abuse victims, for a long time she believed it was her own fault.

‘I used to feel guilty,’ she says. ‘I don’t feel guilty any more. Now I’m able to stand up and have a voice.’