

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

**George McDonald MARCHMONT**

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is George McDonald Marchmont. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1952 and I am presently 66 years of age. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

**Life before going into care**

2. I remember nothing about my life before I went into care, I was only four. My mum was called [REDACTED] and my dad was [REDACTED]. They are no longer alive, but I don't know when they died. I know nothing about them.
3. I have an older sister Josephine, known as Jo, and an older brother Robert, who is known as Bob. I also had a younger sister called [REDACTED] but she is dead now. I'm not sure what the age differences are between us. I think Jo is in her seventies now and Bob is in his late sixties.
4. I know that I was born in [REDACTED] in Glasgow, but I have no idea why I was put into care. My first memory is of being in a home, which I have since found out was called Dunclutha in Dunoon. [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later

[REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later

5. I can remember leaving there, crossing over water on a ferry, catching a steam train and then a taxi and then going into foster care. Jo and Bob were there and I think a woman and a man took us. I don't know who they were.

**Foster care at [REDACTED] Elgin**

6. We were put into foster care at [REDACTED] which was a croft between [REDACTED] It was a good half mile off the main road with fields all around. There was no water or electricity in the house and we had to get water from a well that was about quarter-of-a-mile away, near some woods.
7. My younger sister [REDACTED] didn't come when we did, she arrived maybe about a year later, though I'm not sure when.
8. The croft just had three rooms, it was a pokey place. There was a bedroom to the left off the lobby when you went in the front door and a living room to the right. Off the living room was a small bedroom at the back.
9. In the livingroom were two cupboards, a fire, a cooker and a sink that had to be filled from the well. There was a table next to the sink and another big table in the middle of the floor. The only lighting in the living room was a paraffin lamp and there was a candle in the bedroom. There were no carpets, just vinyl on the floors and a few rugs.
10. There were hedges up each side of the brae leading up to the house and a garden with apple trees in front of the house. On the left of the house was a red brick milk shed and washroom that was attached to the house. There was also a byre built onto the side of the house and a couple of sheds nearby. In front of the byre was the "midden" where all the rubbish went.

**Routine at [REDACTED] Elgin***First day*

11. I remember the taxi had to reverse up the brae when we got there. There were geese and hens going about the place. I remember being a bit frightened, I didn't know what to expect. A woman came out of the house and walked down to the taxi. This was JCU [REDACTED] and she was to be our foster carer. I don't know how old she would have been, possibly in her sixties.
12. She started speaking to the people who took us up there and we all went into the house. She then took us to the big bedroom and showed us our beds. She told us to call her "Aunt JCU [REDACTED]", but she was no aunt to me.

*Mornings and bedtime*

13. At first the three of us shared the big bedroom where there was a big bed and another single bed along the window. There was a fire in the room, but she never put it on and the beds were always damp. When [REDACTED] came, Bob and I were moved to the wee bedroom off the living room. Aunt JCU [REDACTED] slept in the living room on a sofa bed.

*Washing and bathing*

14. There was no toilet in the house, we had to use a pail that was kept in the living room. We had to empty it every day into the midden.
15. A metal bath was put on a chair in the middle of the living room and that's where we had to stand and wash ourselves. Even when we were all older and had reached puberty, we had to stand there and take all our clothes off. The water could be hot or cold.

16. If we weren't washing right she would rub the carbolic soap that we had to use on our tongues.

#### *Food*

17. Sometimes she made porridge in the morning. It was eatable, that was all. Sometimes we got tea. Eventually we had to make our own breakfast. Sometimes we got lunch, sometimes we didn't. Once I started going to school, I got lunch there and that was fine. I helped myself to everybody else's if they didn't want it.
18. I learnt to cook while I was there. I would make mince or porridge, whatever I could. There was never much food.
19. Every night Aunt JCU made what she called "sapps", which was bread, milk and "Kit-e-Kat" cat food, all mixed together. We were made to eat that all the time as well as the cats. She wouldn't eat it. She would give us it and have mince and tatties or soup herself and some biscuits. When she felt like it she might give us a biscuit.
20. She would boil up potatoes for the chickens outside. We were so starved that we used to eat the potatoes instead of giving them to the hens.

#### *Clothing*

21. Most of the time, at home, we just had to wear rags. We didn't have many clothes to wear. Some people would hand clothes into the house for us. Aunt JCU got money for clothes for us and would take us into Elgin to get them. She would buy them, but the next day she would take them back to get the money back. That way, nobody could say she didn't buy them.
22. I had to wear shorts with big underpants underneath. The underpants were so big that they hung down about two inches below my shorts. Everybody at school laughed at us so Bob and I used to stop at this bridge on our way to school, take our

underpants off and put them in our bags. We would then change again on our way back home.

23. At the weekend we had to wash all our own clothes and JCU's with carbolic soap and a washboard.

#### *Schooling*

24. When we first arrived I was too young for school so I would stay at the croft on my own, while my sister and brother went. I would just be left to play on my own.
25. Even when I was old enough to go, Aunt JCU kept me off school a lot to do things for her on the croft. I couldn't even read or write when I left school at fourteen. I don't understand why the school didn't catch on.
26. At first we all went to primary school and then to Elgin Academy. I was kept back every year. I was withdrawn, but I just got on with it. I never really mixed, I thought all the other children were just different. They were happy and I wasn't.
27. One teacher was very good to me. I think she knew something was wrong, but she never did anything about it.

#### *Contact with family*

28. I never had any contact with my parents while I was in care. I don't know whether my brother and sisters did.

#### *Relationship with foster parent*

29. JCU never showed us any love or affection. We would never go to her any time we might have been upset.

*Visits/inspections*

30. A man from the home where we came from visited once a year. When he came, we were sent outside and he never spoke to us. I don't know who he was, we were never told his name.

*Birthdays/Christmas*

31. Birthdays were never celebrated at all. Sometimes at Christmas people would hand presents in to us. We would get them on Christmas day, but they were gone the next day and we would never see them again. I remember one year I got a red toy taxi. It was taken off me the next day and that was that.
32. There was never a Christmas tree up, but I think there were one or two decorations dotted around.
33. We would have a Christmas goose. She used to breed them and she would get someone to come and kill them. Afterwards, she locked us in the barn to pluck them.

*Healthcare*

34. I was bad with asthma when I was young and had to use inhalers and tablets. I remember one day when Jo and Bob were at school I had an attack. I was that bad that I just sat on the floor next to the sink. She never did anything to help me and never gave me my medication.
35. She had to take me into the doctor occasionally to get my asthma medication, but she never took me any other time. I had a few injuries over the years, but I never got any medical attention for them.
36. I only ever went to the dentist through the school.

*Holidays and trips*

37. She never had a car and never took us anywhere. There were no holidays or trips anywhere.

*Chores*

38. Aunt JCU would give us all our chores to do. She would then check that we'd done them right and if we hadn't she would give us a beating. She would just be sitting in the house while we were doing all our chores.
39. We had to collect water every morning from the well and make sure the metal basin in the kitchen was filled. That had to be filled every morning before we went to school.
40. When she decided to get water in the house, we had to dig a trench from the next door croft every night after school. It had to be deep so that the farmer's plough wouldn't go through it and we had to dig it all out by hand. It took us weeks.
41. A few fields down from the house was a wood where we had to go and collect sticks for the fire. We had to bring them back to the house, chop them and stack them.
42. At weekends we had a whole lot of chores to do. We had to paint the sheds with creosote and dig the garden. We had to help with the sheep, feed the geese and chop sticks. If we didn't do it we would get a hiding with her walking stick or the dog's chain.
43. We had to pluck all the hens and the geese after they had been killed. We were locked in the barn till they were all done. One time [REDACTED] and I had been locked in and we thought we'd play cowboys and indians. We made marks on our faces with creosote from a big barrel that was in there and put feathers in our hair from the chickens. That was a good laugh. We got into trouble for that after though. We

were burnt from the creosote and we got a hiding on the bare backside with a slipper.

44. A farmer rented land from Aunt JCU and we had to help him with his sheep when they needed dipped. His name was [REDACTED]. He never beat us at all, but he would have seen what Aunt JCU did and he did nothing about it. We would also have to help him when he cut the tails and testicles off the sheep.

*Pocket money*

45. We never got any pocket money, even for all the chores we were made to do.

**Abuse at [REDACTED] Elgin**

46. One time I was off school when I was about six and Aunt JCU was doing the toilet in the pail in the livingroom. She couldn't sit because she had a straight leg, so she had to stand and do it. I opened the door and went into the room. I told her I was hungry. She told me to come over to her and repeat what I'd said. I did and she grabbed my hair and stuck my face in her backside.
47. On another occasion we had forgotten to fill the metal basin with water from the well so she belted the basin off my brother's head. She did it so hard the imprint of his head was left in the basin.
48. When Bob and I went down to get some water one time, I stopped to speak to the cows. Aunt JCU shouted me over and when I got near she pushed me onto the electric fence that was around the field they were in. I got such a shock, right through my body, that I fell to the ground in all the mud.
49. If we hadn't brushed our shoes or done our homework, we could be in bed, just getting off to sleep, when Aunt JCU would come in. She would throw the blankets



off us and we would put our hands up to protect ourselves. When we did that, she would grab us by the balls or the hair and pull us out of bed.

50. She also had a Shetland sheepdog that she would make bite us when we were in bed. We would often go to school with bites on our arms. I don't know why the school never said anything.
51. Another time while I was lying in bed she hit me with her walking stick and I got a black eye. At school the next day she told them that I had been in a fight.
52. After Bob and I had been moved to the wee room off the living room, she locked us in there for three days one time. I can't remember why. We got nothing to eat and had to do the toilet in the cats' box that was in there. On the third day, she'd just unlocked the door when the grocer van came. Bob and I sneaked out when she went out to the van. We were so hungry, we opened up a jar of jam and started eating it.
53. One day, when [REDACTED] was about ten and I would be about eleven, [REDACTED] was cowering in a space at the wall next to a chest of drawers. Aunt JCU [REDACTED] was belting her with a hockey stick and [REDACTED] started shouting that Aunt JCU [REDACTED] had broken her arm. I don't know what got into me, but I ran over and grabbed the hockey stick, ran out and threw it into the corn field outside. Nothing was said when I went back in.
54. When I was about twelve, I had washed myself at the bath in the living room as usual, when a cat that was curled up on a chair beside me stuck its claws in my backside. When it did, I knocked the bath over and the water went everywhere. I wanted to put my pants on to clean it up, but she wouldn't let me. I had to mop up all the water stark naked. I picked the bath up and she whacked me right on the willy with her walking stick. I dropped the bath and doubled over and I got the walking stick over my back.

55. Sometimes she even tied me to the fence outside with string, with my arms stretched out behind me. I don't know why, but I could be there for half a day, maybe longer. I just had to urinate in my trousers.
56. Another punishment she used was with a poker that was lying beside the fire. I remember I was ready for school one day and I think I must have done something wrong. She got Jo to hold my feet and Bob to hold my arms and she banged the poker off my elbows.
57. She would also make us smack each other, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
58. Another time, when [REDACTED] was about eleven, she was washing at the bath and didn't want to take her bra off. Aunt JCU [REDACTED] got up off her chair and started grabbing at [REDACTED] bra strap. She pulled her bra right off her and then pulled [REDACTED] knickers off her too.

### Leaving foster care

59. I left school at fourteen, which was the age you left at that time. I signed on the dole and a few weeks later I got offered a job at the golf course in Elgin as an apprentice green keeper. I told them that I couldn't read or write, but they said not to worry and that they would take it as it comes. They were very good to me and I was given a four year apprenticeship.
60. Jo left when she was sixteen or seventeen to start nursing in Aberdeen. I remember she had packed her suitcase and was just about to go and catch her bus when Aunt JCU [REDACTED] emptied the case on the floor. Jo just had to grab everything and shove it back in the case. I was sad to see her leaving and after she did things at home got even worse.

61. Bob ran away and was away for about three days before the police caught him and took him back. I think he had been at the shows somewhere. He was back for a wee while and then ran away again. The second time he never came back, I think someone came and took him away to a children's home.
62. [REDACTED] ran away too. She went to school one day and just never came back. She had mental health issues and was taken to a mental health hospital in Banff. I tried to do my best to help her.
63. I was then left on my own with Aunt JCU [REDACTED] and things were no better. I never tried to run away though, I had nowhere to go and nowhere to stay.
64. I worked at the golf club from Monday to Friday from eight in the morning till four in the afternoon as well as the occasional Saturday. I was getting paid about a hundred pounds a week, but nothing changed at home. I never got to keep the money I earned, I had to give it to her. Sometimes she would give me some money for the bus, other times she wouldn't and I had to walk.
65. After a time, when I was seventeen, I was working late because of a competition and when I got back the door was locked. I knocked and knocked, but there was no reply, so I had to sleep under the hedge that night. I decided there and then that enough was enough and I never went back.
66. I went into Elgin and walked about the streets and eventually slept in a wooden garden shed. After I got paid, I went to a bed and breakfast place and they took me in there. I stayed there for a couple of years.
67. I crashed my bike and ended up in Dr Gray's hospital in Elgin where two men came to see me. I don't know who they were, I think they must have been from the social work department. They told me that I was no longer in their care, but that if I ever needed anything I could give them a phone. I felt like saying to them that they hadn't given me any help when I needed it so why would I ask now?

68. I went back to see Aunt JCU twice after that, I don't know why. It was maybe because I hoped she might have had a thought to herself and would say "sorry". "Sorry" never came though.

### **Life after being in care**

69. After I had served my four years apprenticeship at Elgin, I applied for a green keeping job in Aberdeen that I saw advertised. I got the job and was there for eight years. When I got that job I got a tutor to come in twice a week to teach me. I needed to know how to read, write and count for my job as green keeper.
70. I had nowhere to stay when I first went to Aberdeen. On the golf course was a wooden bothy where some of the tools were kept. It had a coal fire in it so I decided to stay there when the winter came on. I never told anyone and eventually I got caught after my boss discovered the fire was still hot first thing in the morning.
71. I got taken to see the club captain and secretary and I thought I'd lost my job. Instead, when I told them the reason I'd been staying there, I was handed a set of keys for a flat by the club secretary. The tears were running down my face. They were all good to me.
72. I met my first wife when I was in Aberdeen and we got married on the [REDACTED] 1977, or thereabouts. It was okay for a while, until she started going out with other men.
73. I then got a job as head green keeper at Golspie golf club and moved there with my first wife. I wasn't in Golspie for a year before she was away with someone else. I had bought a chip shop café and came back to find it all in darkness one night. I opened up to find the till and the freezer were empty. I went home and found that the house had been completely emptied too. She must have got a van to take everything away, there was nothing left.

74. We had been married for about five years and had a daughter together.
75. I got married a second time to a lady who had a son before she met me and I brought him up from the age of five. We had a son together too, however she had mental health issues and was eventually taken into a home. After that, I had to give up my green keeping job to look after my kids.
76. Once the kids grew up I got a seasonal job for six months at Dornoch Castle as breakfast chef. I have not worked since it finished.

#### **Reporting of abuse at [REDACTED] Elgin**

77. I never told anyone at school what was happening at home, either at primary or secondary schools. If I had and she found out, I would have got another hiding. I knew it wasn't right at the time, but what could I do?
78. I never reported it to the social work department or the police. Jo later told me that one of the neighbours had reported it to the police. I don't know who that was though and nothing ever happened.
79. One of the only people I told was the minister of the church in Golspie. He was good, he listened and he believed me.

#### **Impact**

80. I don't go out entertaining or visiting, I just keep myself to myself. I find it hard to have a conversation with people.
81. I think about my time in foster care every day. Even now, when I go to bed at night I'm always waiting for Aunt JCU to come through the door. It's in my mind all the time.

82. I take pills for depression. I felt like doing away with myself at one point about ten years ago, but I'm over that now. I think it was just everything that has happened to me in my life that made me feel that way.
83. [REDACTED] and I were quite close and I went to see her in the home. She died a few years ago. It still bothers me, I should have done more to protect her
84. I have never had any counselling and it's a bit late now.

### **Records**

85. I have never bothered to get any records of my time in care.

### **Other information**

86. I'm still in touch with my sister Jo and brother Bob. I've not said much to them, but I have mentioned some of the things that happened to me.
87. Aunt JCU [REDACTED] died a few years ago, but I wasn't even aware of it at the time. I know she was getting paid for having us because she used to get a white envelope with a blue cross every month or so from the post office. When she opened it up I saw it was full of notes. We never saw anything of it though.
88. I believe it was the government's policy at that time to move children out of homes and into foster care. To me, the quicker the children were moved out of the homes, the quicker other ones could be moved in. The home got money for every child and therefore the more children they had, the more money they got. Somebody pocketed a lot of money out of it, but it didn't help us.

89. There should be a lot more checks made of children in foster care. That never happened to us at all. The people checking should see the child on their own, away from the foster parent. They should be asked if they are okay, are they being treated well, fed well and clothed well. That never happened to us. Schools should keep notes of children that are in foster care and should monitor their behaviour and appearance.
90. 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.....

27/03/2018