

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Josephine DUTHIE

Support person present: No

1. My name is Josephine Ada Duthie I was born on [REDACTED] 1948. I am 68 years old. My contact details are known to the inquiry. I am representing my brothers Robert and George who along with my sister [REDACTED] were also in foster care. I would like to refer to us all as the "Marchmont Children" which was our birth name.

Background


2. I was born in Glasgow and was the eldest child of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Both my parents are since deceased. I have two brothers Robert Marchmont who was born in 1949 and George Marchmont who was born in 1952. I had a younger sister [REDACTED] who was born in 1953. She died in 1993 aged forty.
3. I spent most of my working life as a nurse but have since retired. I am twice widowed and have three children and four grandchildren.
4. The time I want to tell you about was a period of my life between 1956 and 1966 when I was in foster care in the Morayshire area.

Life before going into care

5. My vivid memories of life in Glasgow were walking the streets with my little brother in the dark. I also recall having to eat candle wax. I remember that my mother was absent and that a van came and took us into a home. I have no real memory of my mother and have only very vague memories of my father. I know now that they were unable support me or my siblings.
6. I recall that there was an arrest warrant issued for my mother for fraud and she was arrested. My father was a fishmonger in Glasgow and was unable to look after us or pay the bills at the house. The house was repossessed and we were put into care. I know that the police were involved with my mother but I was just too young to understand what was happening. I would see my parents on one more occasion when they came to see us in Dunclutha Children's home in Dunoon but after that I never see them again.

Care homes before foster care

7. In 1954 as a family, we were put into Castlemilk Children's Home in Glasgow. We were returned home in 1955 for a short spell but were badly neglected and so were sent to Dunclutha Children's Home in Dunoon. We remained there till 1956. I can't remember if the whole family was with me in these homes as we were all split up at different times during this period. I know that my sister was sent elsewhere as she was too young. I didn't see her till she was about three years old and arrived at the croft in [REDACTED]

8. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
- 

9. Secondary Institutions - to be published later



10. I don't know who made the decision about our future but I recall the nurses at the home telling us that we would be moving to a farm with lots of animals and the chance to live in the country. We were naturally very excited about this. I think that the person who dealt with our case at The Social Work offices, 73 John Street, Glasgow was called Mr Brough.

Moving to foster care

11. My brothers Robert, George and I were taken the croft by a Miss Kennedy of the social work department at Glasgow. My sister [REDACTED] did not come with us as she was too young. I recall going to Inverness and then getting a taxi to the croft. The year would be 1956.

12. I recall when we arrived there I saw two crofts. One had a corrugated iron roof and I remember saying to my brothers that I hope the bombers don't spot it. It was a thought that went back to what my parents use to say to me when we lived in Glasgow just after the Second World War. I don't know why I said it as this was well after the war had finished.

13. The actual croft was at a place called [REDACTED] Elgin. There was a woman with a head scarf and a long nose. She greeted us and we were told to stay outside till Miss Kennedy completed the paperwork. The taxi then left. After a few hours we were brought inside the house and given some porridge. We were told to be quiet and then put into our room and the door was locked.

There was no running water and no electricity. The woman's name was JCU and she was about 59 years old. There were no other children at the croft we were the only ones. Miss Kennedy died very shortly after she placed us at the croft.

Foster care with Miss JCU

14. This was going to be the worst experience of my life for both me and my brothers. We were to be used as cheap labour to run the croft. We had little or no supervision. We were in a house with no running water or electricity. We had to call Miss JCU "Aunty".
15. My brothers and I arrived in the May of 1956 and my sister joined us in the August of that year. The croft consisted of about ten acres of land which was rented out to a shepherd. He kept his animals there. We were to look after them when he was not there. She also had geese and hens that she sold to the local butcher along with the eggs.
16. The croft had was a long building with a milk house, a wash house, a lounge one bedroom, a living room which had a sink, a fire and her bed. There was another area where the boys slept. There was a barn and a stable. She had ten cats.
17. Initially we were all in one room together. As my brother got older he went into Aunty's room and Aunty moved into the front room of the house. All the bedroom doors had locks on them.

Routine

18. Our day started every morning at 5am. I would collect firewood and water needed for the house. We had to do that every morning and at night. Aunty just sat and stoked the fire. We would then feed the animals and collect the free

range eggs which had been laid all over the croft. I would also help to get the others up and dressed while she sat stoking the fire.

19. We would then be fed porridge which I had to make. After work was completed there was a two mile walk to get the bus to go to the school in Elgin. At least at school we got a good school lunch and we were out of her care.
20. On return to the croft after school we would have to march to the croft as she would be watching and we would be punished for failing to do it. We would have to go and find the geese and herd them into their pen. We would then be given a piece of toast with either a sardine or a cheese triangle on it along with a cup of tea and it was off to bed. Sometimes she made a watery soup. She would also buy shortbread for herself but we never saw any of it. My brothers often eat the cat food as they were starving.
21. Before we went to bed we were either made to stand in the corner till bed time or were locked outside to stand till she was ready for bed. It was in all weathers and I can recall suffering from chilblains as a result of the cold weather. It was always dark and we had no idea of time as we didn't have watches and there were no clocks in the croft.
22. When [REDACTED] came to the croft she and I slept in one room. Miss [REDACTED] JCU had another room and my two brothers had their own room. If my brothers wet the bed they would have to wash the sheets themselves.
23. When you washed, you washed in a basin of cold water. This was every night when you were at school. I had to wash in front of my siblings despite the fact I was a bit older. The toilet consisted of a pail there was no flushing toilet. There was no bath. After a few years we did get a cold water tap into the house. There was never warm water for washing. Electricity did eventually come to the house whilst I was there.

24. Washing clothes and bedding was done at a washboard and mangle. Our clothes came from Glasgow social work or were hand downs from neighbours. I did not wear a brassiere until I started nursing as I was never given one.
25. There was no leisure time to play. She did have a wireless but we were not allowed to listen to it.
26. As there was no electricity till late in my stay the only light source was paraffin lamps. The only heat source was one fire which was in Aunty's room.

Visits

27. Our parents never visited us at the croft. We did have some social workers call once a year. I knew them as Children's Officers. We were far too frightened to say anything to them as we were always spoken to in the presence of Miss JCU Miss JCU knew exactly when they were going to arrive and we had to be on our best behaviour. We were never spoken to and I had no say in my welfare. The sole person in charge of my life was Miss JCU

Schooling

28. I attended the local school called St Andrews in Lhanbryde, Elgin from 1956. Scholastically I did well there but the other pupils could understand foster care and why I lived with an aunty. I also had a different accent and that didn't help. I found making friends difficult.
29. In 1961 I went on to Elgin Academy. The Elgin school was fine and I had friends there but I couldn't really tell them what was happening. I did well at school which later enabled me to start a career in nursing. The only problem with school was that if I was late getting there because of the chores I had to do I was required to explain it to the headmaster. All he said was that he understood but he did nothing about it. I later learned that it was in my social work notes that I was considered to be very quiet at school.

30. My brothers and sisters did not do well at school because of our harsh routine. I used to help them with homework as they weren't allowed to do it at home during work time. I did my homework under the bridge before I got home. You couldn't be seen from the bridge. Aunty was pleased that I was doing well but she didn't encourage me in any way
31. I recall one of the teachers saying to me "well at least you were all kept together". What this meant to me was that we were all abused together. That remark stays with me to this day.

Religion

32. We had to attend at the local church. Aunty didn't go to church. When we were younger we just went to the Sunday School but as we got older we also had to attend the service. It was a protestant church. The only trip out we were allowed to go on was the Sunday School picnic.

Food

33. The food was very poor quality and often my brothers would eat the cat food to stave off their hunger. We were always hungry. When we were at school we had lunch but in the holidays there was no lunch and we were constantly hungry. I was badly underweight and at age eighteen I only weighed six stone. This would later have a telling effect when I tried to start my nursing career and was turned down because of my weight.

Birthdays/Christmas

34. In the beginning of our stay at the croft at Christmas time we would hang up stockings and get an orange or something small but that stopped. We had to kill a goose. You were allowed a morsel of goose along with a brussel sprout.

We also got a hamper once a year from the local church minister. We got none of the hamper for ourselves.

35. Birthdays were not acknowledged at any time during my stay at the croft.

Pocket money

36. We did not receive any pocket money and so we couldn't buy things like comics or sweets. I used to get comics from my school friends who had finished reading them. I kept them in my den in the woods. I also had a doll but I wasn't allowed to play with it. I got it at Duncutha when I was there. It used to sit in my room but it disappeared one day and I never saw it again.

37. We used to go to the "tattie howkin" every year and we would be paid a salary but Auntie would take the money from me and we never saw it. Just before I left foster care I got a job at Baxter's in Fochabers. It was primarily to make some money to pay for books for my nursing training. Auntie took all the wages and only gave me enough for my bus fare there. I had to walk the six miles back.

Medical

38. The only medical care I remember was attending at the doctor's surgery in Elgin for treatment for a sore leg. This had been caused by her tying me to the fence. Nothing was ever said. There was a nurse visited the school twice a year and you would get a check-up.

Holidays

39. Holidays were spent working at the croft or standing to attention. We never went away anywhere. We were never returned to our family for holidays and so it was just another day at the croft with no school.

Running away

40. My eldest brother Robert and my sister [REDACTED] regularly ran away. They were brought back by the police who always left them back in the care of Miss JCU [REDACTED] and wouldn't listen to what they had to say. I never ran away as I realised I had nowhere to run to. I had a "den" in the woods where I could get away from things. [REDACTED] also ran away regularly.

Abuse

41. We were beaten every day by Aunty. We were never allowed to play and had no toys. She was just using us as slave labour on her croft to do the everyday jobs needed to keep the croft running. We were from the city of Glasgow and not used to the country ways. For example she told us to go and collect potatoes from the field and we had no idea what she meant so she just beat us with the bucket she used to collect them and told us to stay in the field till we had finished.
42. Every night we would go to bed and during the night she would get us up half asleep. She would use her dog to bite our heels to waken us up. She would make us stand to attention in the hall until she went to bed. She had both of the doors to the hall closed. When we heard her go to bed we would lie on the floor to try to get some sleep. When we heard her get up in the morning we would have to be standing to attention in the hall. That happened on a regular basis.
43. We were beaten with anything she had in her hand at the time. She would corner you so you couldn't get away and then she would hit you with whatever pleased her. She would also tie you to a fence when she was beating your siblings so that you wouldn't run away. She would lock you in the bedroom so that you couldn't escape the beatings by running into the woods. After I had left the croft I heard that my sister had her arm broken. It was just after this that she was diagnosed as a mental retard and was put into a mental home.

44. She would make us spend all night locked in the barn or the shed if she thought that we were considering running away.
45. She had ten cats on the croft and they were fed better than us. I can remember my brothers eating cat food but I couldn't. We had free range hens and I used to find their eggs and make a meal for myself in a den I had created in the woods. We were always hungry and underfed.
46. She would often burn us with a cigarette but always in places where it didn't show. If we didn't eat what was put in front of you she would pull down our jersey and burn you on the back of the neck with her cigarette.
47. I can remember coming back from school and seeing [REDACTED] hiding under the bed with brown fluid coming out of her ears. She would tell me that Auntie had beaten her and locked her in her room. [REDACTED] had several suicide attempts in later life and ended up in hospital for nearly all her adult life.
48. She would make you stand outside all night in your pyjamas. It was so cold that the only way to stay warm was to urinate in your pyjamas. She would also send us out at night time in your pyjamas with bare feet to find the cats. You were not allowed back into the house until you found the cats. This happened all the year round.
49. Auntie has a Shetland sheep dog which was not a nice animal. She would encourage the dog to bite at your ankles until blood was drawn. She derived some sort of pleasure from this and it occurred three or four times a week.
50. She would make us stand outside with a white cover over our heads. This would cause the bats to fly towards us and land on the white covers. My sister [REDACTED] was terrified by this and used to scream in terror. I would try and stop her screaming because Auntie would also stop if we were not reacting.

51. I had very white nails and Aunty didn't like that so she would take my hands and cover them in mud. I was not allowed to wash the mud off. She would force us to drink from the water barrel. When we were tarring the roof of the barn she would throw tar at us and accuse us of being dirty.
52. She made my younger brother and I kill the geese. She would get us to place a stick across the neck and then pull the head back until we had strangled it. We were quite young at this time it was very upsetting for a child.
53. When I had my first period Aunty accused me of having been with a man. I did not have a clue what she was talking about. She made me stay in my room for a whole week.
54. I was about sixteen when I refused to wash and strip in front of my brothers. She made me sleep out at night with the hens and she kept me off school. There was no toilet so we had to use the "midden" at the farm. The midden was in the open air in full view.
55. The older my brothers got the harder she treated them. She would lock them up for days at a time without water or food. They were able to prise the window open enough so that they could urinate. She would grab them by their private parts and lead them around the farm just to demonstrate her control.
56. During the visits by the Children's Officers which Aunty knew about in advance she would dress us all in our Sunday clothes and tell us to go out and play. The trouble was that we didn't know how to play so we would just stand about. We were never spoken to by the officers as they went in and sat with Aunty.
57. In the early days whilst I was at school my brothers and sisters would either be locked in their room all day or be made to stay outside. She would pick on you one person at a time and would tie you up to beat and punish you. As my

brother Robert got older I could see that Aunty was wary to do anything while he was about.

58. The beatings were her method of controlling us. There was a day when one of us would be favoured and would administer the beatings to the others. You used to have to hold them down and beat them in aunty's presence while she watched on.

59. We had to look after her animals in all weathers. We would have to rescue them from the snow and the barbed wire fences. We had to grade the eggs and feed the animals. We also had to kill the animals. We would be sent to the fields with scythes to cut down the thistles so that the cows didn't eat them. Every two years we would have to climb into the well and stand waist deep in mud. We would clear out the mud so that the spring ran properly.

60. We would make butter and I can remember spending ages turning the butter churn. We washed our clothes outside and I can recall being made to clean the chimney which was very dangerous. We climb the ladder and she would hit our legs with a stick. We had to whitewash the walls, dig drains to keep the water away and also cut all the hedges. These were crofting tasks but not for young children. She would praise you for doing the tasks. I have no idea what she did all day.

61. My brothers, sister and I all knew that what was happening was wrong but we were children and didn't understand what was happening. We all wanted our parents back. I recall walking over the hill at Christmas time and looking at the other croft where the children were having fun. Why weren't we? It was ten years of being controlled by Aunty.

62. When we first arrived at the croft we were allowed to play with the children at the surrounding crofts. It was the summer holidays and we had arrived in May. Aunty would stand at the window and just stare at us. This had an effect on the other children who stopped coming. After that it was just work all the time. She

constantly berated my parents and belittled us with her comments. She accused my mother of being a "Salvation Army run around".

63. Aunty called me "Lady Muck" and told me that I came from the slums of Glasgow. She didn't like my attitude and accused me of being a wayward child. This was a regular feature appearing in my social work notes. She used to like me stroking her leg. She had fallen off her bike as a child during the war and it had to be operated on so it wasn't quite right. If you stopped she would take the red hot poker from the fire and touch you with it. Not in a way that it left a permanent burn but enough to hurt you.
64. She would scream at us and take our nails and scratch them on the door. I don't know why she did this but I think on later life reflection that she was quite unstable.
65. There was no heating in the croft apart from the open fire and we often had to clear the ice on the inside of the window to see out. Despite our school meals we were under nourished. We would have to hit our siblings when she told us but we would take them through to the bedroom and hit the bed instead. We also knew that if she was talking about her past life she would leave us alone
66. There were cats everywhere and they were being fed and we were not. She would often buy meat to make soup and she would eat the meat and force us to eat the fat. We hated the fat and used to slip it to the dog to eat.
67. The fashion at the time at school was for short skirts. I only had a long skirt so when some clothing came from Glasgow I managed to make a short skirt which I hid out near the railway line. I would have to change into it every morning without her knowledge.
68. If we had been made to stand outside in our school gym shorts and we had to pee to keep us warm she would make us wear them to school the next morning. I think it must have been very smelly. I can remember stopping at the burn on

the way to school and washing my shorts and then wearing them under my skirt until they had dried in time for gym class.

69. We were always hungry. I had a den in the woods because she never went there. I had pinched some pots and pans from her rubbish store and used to make nettle soup. I would also find some of the eggs about the croft to cook. On one occasion I tried to cook a hedgehog because I had heard that you could do this. I caught it, killed it and coated it in mud. I then cooked on the fire it but it exploded as I didn't clean it. I never tried that again. I was so underweight that the first time I applied to study nursing I was turned down for being too undernourished. I was successful on the second occasion a year later although I had not put on any weight.
70. My sister [REDACTED] was very aggressive at school especially towards the other pupils. When she first arrived she was well treated but when she was not doing her jobs about the croft she was very badly beaten by Aunty. [REDACTED] was kept away from us and was often locked in her room with Aunty. We could hear Aunty screaming at her and [REDACTED] crying. [REDACTED] would run away as did my brother Robert.
71. Other people in the community knew this was happening to us in Aunty's care. The neighbouring croft knew what was happening and they were good enough to invent jobs around their croft that they needed a hand with to get us to come there. Of course when we arrived there were no jobs but we were fed and allowed to play.
72. My brother Robert was sexually abused by a friend of Aunty's called Mr [REDACTED] EEN [REDACTED] Robert was about twelve or thirteen years old. Robert told me that he was taken to Edinburgh for a few days where he locked him in a room. Of course we couldn't tell Aunty this. Robert did not tell me about this at the time but only in later life. Mr [REDACTED] EEN [REDACTED] was a member of The [REDACTED] Church. Morayshire. I didn't want to give you his name because I think that his family still live there. Mr [REDACTED] EEN [REDACTED] is deceased. Mr [REDACTED] EEN [REDACTED] would

take all of us out on trips and I recall one trip to Strathpepper where Robert went off with him. When they came back Robert was crying and he had a cut knee. I asked what had happened and he just said that he had fallen. He only ever abused Robert. I am sure that Aunty did not know about this. It must have gone on the whole time we were at Aunty's.

73. The only person that abused me was a local villager who used to give me a lift home from school. One day he tried to touch me but I jumped from his car and ran off. He told me that if I said anything to Aunty he would tell her that I had started it and it was my fault. It only happened once. Although he had tried several times to pick me up. He was an older man then and will almost certainly be deceased.

Reporting abuse

74. In 1966 after I had left the croft and had started nursing I wrote a ten page letter to Glasgow Social Work Department to ask them to remove my brothers from the croft. They came to see me and I told the authorities everything. I learned that they visited the croft and spoke to Miss JCU who advised the social services that my letter was an exaggeration and that my brothers were fine. The upshot was that they left my brothers at the croft in the care of Miss JCU
75. Early in 1957 my brothers must have said something to the adults at the neighbouring croft. They were called Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] They contacted the social services and we were interviewed in the presence of Miss JCU Of course we couldn't say anything and told the authorities that we were okay. There was no one to tell about what was happening. After this incident we were all severely beaten. The [REDACTED] often pretended to Aunty that we were helping them to keep us away from her.
76. In 1964 the local minister knew exactly what was happening as he wrote a letter to the authorities in Glasgow suggesting that we should be removed from

Aunty's care. The minister and his wife Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] knew because my brothers and I told him about what was happening. The minister's wife was spoken to but not believed as it was thought that she did not know enough about country life. I have handed to you a note from the records of my brother George recording this visit and the outcome.

77. My sister JCU [REDACTED] and the boys used to run away regularly from the croft. They were always caught and brought back by the police. They would try to tell the police what was happening but would not be believed because they were from Glasgow and were a lot of trouble. When they were returned Aunty would beat them, lock them in their rooms and starve them. Sometimes it was for a week. Aunty would tell the school that they were ill.
78. I think we also told other church goers about what was happening but there was nothing done.
79. We never saw our parents, so we were unable to tell them what was happening. We learned that they had other children. The birth parents were not allowed to know where the foster parents lived.

Leaving foster care

80. I left foster care two days before my eighteenth birthday. I had packed my suitcase and left it in the bedroom. When I came to collect it I found that it had been emptied in the middle of the floor. I presume that she did this to try to make me miss the train to Aberdeen where I was going to start my nursing career. As it happened I didn't miss the bus.
81. All I had to start my nursing career was a uniform, white vest, stockings and a pair of black shoes. I had to stay at the nursing home during the holidays as I didn't want to go back to the croft and had nowhere else to go. I stayed at the nursing home for three years. I learned from the other nurses how to dress

properly and what everyday things like tampax were. I was always quiet but I enjoyed the job which I did for thirty years. In later years I wrote a book called "Say Nothing". My colleagues in nursing read the book and then asked me why I didn't tell them at the time. My answer was simple - what could they do?

82. I had spoken to the careers officer at school to help me get away from the croft. I wanted to go to art school but Aunty did not approve hence the reason I went to nursing. My brothers and sisters were crying at me leaving but I had to get away, nothing else mattered but getting away.

Life after foster care

83. While I was nursing I called into the croft to see my brothers and sister. They were not there and Aunty said she didn't know where they had gone and that they must be in the woods. I didn't manage to see them.
84. My brother Robert came to visit me at the nurse's home. He needed someone of an adult age to sign paperwork so that he could work on the trawlers. Whilst he was there we made contact with a newspaper reporter who worked for the Aberdeen Press and Journal. He was aware of what was going on but I couldn't allow him to do the article because my younger brother and sister were still there. If that came out they would have suffered.
85. Brother George left the foster care of Aunty when he was sixteen. He went to live at a hostel for boys without a home. [REDACTED] felt that I had left them at the croft and didn't want to speak to me.
86. I learned in later life that Aunty broke [REDACTED]'s arm during one of the beatings she received. She was taken to hospital and on her discharge refused to go back to the croft. The police tried to take her but she resisted. This resulted in her being put into a hostel for young girls. She had mental health problems and the hostel could not cope with her. She was then taken to [REDACTED] Mental

Hospital, [REDACTED] where she remained for some time. [REDACTED] attempted suicide on three occasions. She was later found dead in her flat. The death certificate put it down as natural causes.

87. I had written letters to my siblings but they never got them. After I was married I felt that I had to go back to the croft to see if they were still there. Miss JCU [REDACTED] was there but there was no one else. She was an old lady.

88. I met my husband in my third year at nursing. I was married three months later. I went part time and had three children. My first husband was very kind . He was an alcoholic and died in 1988. My second husband was a friend of my first husband and I married him and was with him for the next 27 years. He passed away recently.

Health Issues as a result of Foster care.

89. As a result of my time in care I have had problems with my left hand and left leg. These were caused when Aunty tied me to a fence while she beat my brothers and sister. I also suffered from corns on my feet which I had from age eight. These have affected the way that I walk.

90. My brother Robert has had terrible problems with his bones and joints. He suffers from Osteonecrosis which means that the bones die as a result of starvation when he was young.

91. Brother George also has problems with his joints.

92. My sister [REDACTED] had severe mental health problems and from the age of fourteen moved from institution to institution. She attempted suicide on several occasions. She never developed properly.

93. All of my siblings were classed as severely backward in their scholastic work. Their personalities were also described as being backward.

94. The Marchmont Children had no choice in their development. We were in the hands of the authorities and a cruel, manipulative woman. Her answer to everything was "what do you expect they come from the slums of Glasgow".

Impact

95. As you could imagine the impact on my family life has been considerable. My brothers are very bitter and have never forgotten. They have no trust whatsoever in any of the authorities who subjected them to what they suffered. My sister [REDACTED] never recovered from the mental and physical abuse and spent many years in [REDACTED] Mental Hospital until she died aged forty.
96. My oldest brother is unable to trust anyone. He is married but is very aggressive although he is now too ill and virtually house bound. My younger siblings suffered mental health problems and [REDACTED] is now deceased. My other brother George lives up north. He was married but was unable to cope. His marriage did not last long. He lives in constant fear of everything and has no trust in anyone.
97. I tried to look after [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later
[REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later
[REDACTED]
I had a young family of three at the time and [REDACTED] was not settling. She would cower in the corner because she thought that my husband was going to beat her. We managed to get her placed in a Home in [REDACTED] where she seemed to get on better.
98. There was no affection shown at any time other than when the Children's Officers called at the house. You had to give Auntie a hug when they were there as she would tell you to come to her. I can only recall one incident when she was good to me and she made me a dress for the school dance. I suspect it was only for her appearance amongst her peers.

99. I recall an occasion when Aunty's first dog called [REDACTED] suffered from a tumour on its leg. Aunty made me hold the dog still while she cut the tumour out. I loved that dog as it followed us about all day. I nursed it until it eventually died a short time later. I remember being devastated.
100. I would describe Aunty as having grey hair and a big nose. She had a straight leg as a result of a bicycle accident. She sometimes wore curlers and glasses. She always wore slippers with pom poms along with an apron. She was always very nice to visitors. Aunty died in 1988 at the age of 92 and I learned about the date of the funeral. My youngest daughter and I went to the funeral. I looked at Aunty in the coffin and couldn't help grabbing her by the nose and saying, "thank god you have gone". I think that my daughter was shocked by this act. I also held one of the cords at the funeral and I think it was to ensure that she went into the ground.
101. I found it very hard to socialise with people. I felt safe in my own house. It was hard to be close to my first husband because of what had happened to me. My first husband was not a bad guy. He died in the house in front of me in 1988. My second marriage was much stronger. He had been injured in a plane crash and I was able to help him which in effect helped me.
102. If you are not shown love you cannot give it back. That was how it felt. When I was with my children I could play with them and learn about love. I never hit my children and they are very loyal to me.
103. When I was nursing I would get a row from the Matron for doing something wrong. This would send me into a sulk. The Matron took me aside and told me that she was not giving me a row but was teaching me. This changed my attitude as I realised that they were trying to help me.
104. I did get some treatment for depression when I had the children. I was on vallium. The health visitors were keeping a close eye on me. My confidence was affected and I was not good at speaking in public.

105. I thought about my time at the croft a lot. I told my children stories about the 'lady with the pussy cats' but I didn't paint her as a bad person. I wish now that I had sought some help when I left the croft.
106. My first husband encouraged me to write down my experiences which I did. My second husband encouraged me to keep going and to publish it as a book. As a result I managed to get the book published and it is called 'Say Nothing'.
107. I was writing poetry and putting it online. As a result I was contacted by a university lecturer from Edinburgh who asked me what the poetry was all about. I told him some of my experiences. He subsequently contacted me recently and asked me if I would be interested in joining the Alliance Leadership Team. They will be funded by the In Care Survivors Support Group and will find ways of allocating funds to the right places and trying to help survivors of abuse.
108. Everything I have done I have done for myself. My brothers are still fighting life and don't trust anyone. They are still worried that things will get back to Miss JCU or her relatives despite the fact that she is dead. I feel sorry for them because I can't help them. Robert went to work on the trawlers where he was well looked after. He went to stay with our mother in Somerset for a spell but my mother took all his money from him and kicked him out. He then met his wife and had three children. He lives in Golspie but does not leave his house very often. George was married for a spell and has a son. His marriage did not work and he is loath to leave the house. My sister died young in supported accommodation she was diagnosed as mentally retarded as a result of her foster care. My father died in 1964 and my mother died in 1987.
109. My mother once tried to contact me pretending to be my aunt. She eventually called back and confirmed to me that she was my mother. She came up in the train and I picked her up at the station. She had knitted me a hat that would not fit a ten year old. She came to my house and ignored my children. She wanted

me to go back home with her. I refused as I had three young children to take care of.

110. I did get about three letters from my mother when we were in foster care. They were heavily censored but one of the letters said that she had another child called [REDACTED] I met [REDACTED] once when she came up looking for some money which my mother told her that she would get from me. I told her that I didn't have any money and she left. She is now in America and I am still in touch with her. I have another sister who I don't speak to as she is too suspicious of me after living with my mother for so long. I am not sure why.

Records

111. I have recovered my social work records but there is lots of stuff missing. I can make them available to you should you require them. There is very little there. I also have a copy of my sister's records. My brothers have a copy of their records.

Other information

112. Miss JCU inherited the croft from a man she used to look after. Apparently she could be heard shouting and ill-treating this man. I always wished that someone had reported this and we would never have ended up at the croft.

Lessons to be learned


113. I think that the big lesson to be learned from all of this is that good records should be kept of where the children are sent. They should not be sent to strange people in strange areas where there is no control or supervision. In my

day children were too terrified to say anything in front of adults. I think that Miss JCU really wanted to have one child to teach how to run the croft. She was paid for us being there.

114. It is important to realise that foster care is just as important institutionalised care. In foster care it is much harder to seek help. It is easier in institutional care to be heard.

115. I would be pleased to give oral evidence at any public hearing. I feel that I owe it to my brothers and sister.

116. 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..... 16. 2. 2017