

## **Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

**John Henry HUTCHINSON**

Support person present: No

Others present: No

1. My name is John Henry Hutchinson. As a Marist Brother my religious name was Brother Angelo Cyril. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1928. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### **Life before joining the Marist Brothers**

2. I was born in Newcastle upon Tyne where I went to St Anthony's Primary School. My mother was Irish and a very practical woman. We were never well off but, despite this, my mother was a very generous person. My father was in the navy.
3. My mother always believed in helping those worse off than ourselves and many a time I would find clothes or shoes missing and I wouldn't know if my mother had given them away or taken them to the pawn shop. I think it was her willingness to help the poor that influenced me in my decision to help the poor during my life.
4. I was at the end of my time in St Anthony's primary school when a lovely old man called Brother Osmund came to the school recruiting boys to train to join the Marist Brothers. What he said about how they helped the poor, especially in rural areas, impressed me. I went home and told my mother that I wanted to become a brother. My mother thought it was a phase and it would pass. What happened after that was that Brother Osmund got two recruits from the upper class and the second one didn't turn up. So I ended up going from my school to the Marist school, in 1940, which has

two names, it's called Hetland House and also Champagne House about eight miles outside Dumfries near a place called Ruthwell. It's a hotel now.

5. The school in Dumfries was a very well organised secondary school run by eight Brothers and the education was excellent. The <sup>SNR</sup> [REDACTED] was Brother <sup>MYT</sup> [REDACTED]; the [REDACTED] was Brother <sup>MNQ</sup> [REDACTED]; the Brother in charge of the boys was Brother Christopher; There was also Brother <sup>MYZ</sup> [REDACTED], Brother Clemens, Brother David, Brother Gatanus and another Brother called either Edwin or Egwin and, finally, Brother Sylvester.
6. It was all religious, there were no lay people there except the cook. They put us through secondary school, it was very good teaching, a good grounding from these monks, as we called them. I got three degrees and various certificates. When I was about to turn sixteen there was a threat that I could be called into the army, the war was still on at the time. So the Brothers sent me to Our Lady's Hermitage School which was in Athlone in Ireland also run by the Marist Brothers.
7. The reason that they sent me there was because there was no call-up. I finished my secondary school and then entered into strict religious training and became a novice or a learner monk. It was fraternal, friendly, strict and very religious. I was there for another year or so when I returned to Scotland. The idea was that when I returned to Scotland I would go to university.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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9. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
10. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
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12. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

**Career**

13. I had taken my first vows as a scholastic, a student Brother, in Athlone, in 1946 then renewed my vows in each of the next five years before taking my perpetual vows

when I was in Africa in 1951. I was sent back to Scotland for a short time where I did four Highers before being sent to Africa at the age of twenty in May 1948.

14. I was a Marist Brother for 49 years until I left on 2 April 1996. During that time I was rarely part of a community and worked all over the world doing a multitude of jobs. In this respect I was considered something of a Maverick. I worked with the Red Cross in Africa and was also in the army for eighteen years. When doing these things my wages went to the Marist Brothers.
15. In 1995 I had been in [REDACTED] but went back to the UK for the annual retreat that the Marist Brothers have. I was a day late and all I had were shorts and a T-shirt while the others were all well-dressed which caused a bit of a laugh amongst them. The Provincial spoke to me briefly saying he wanted to speak to me before the end of the week.
16. I was coming up for my 50<sup>th</sup> year with the Brothers and normally they would pay for you to go on a vacation. So I was expecting to be told this but when I met the Provincial, Brother Ronald McEwan, he said that he thought it best for both me and the Order that I leave the Brothers. He said that for the last number of years I hadn't been part of a community despite the fact that I pointed out that he had allowed me to go out and do the things I had been doing.
17. This was a complete surprise to me and I pointed out that paperwork would have to be completed and sent to Rome to which he said "I'll do it for you. I'm not supposed to but I'll do it for you". The whole thing took about ten minutes and afterwards that was it, after 49 years I was no longer a Marist Brother.
18. However, years later I checked with a person I knew in the administration in Rome, whose name I don't recall, and they said they had received two lots of documents about me leaving the Marist Brothers. They said that the first lot had not been properly filled out and had been rejected and they couldn't locate the second lot. They had never issued dispensation for me leaving and as such I am possibly still a Marist Brother.

### **Time spent working in St Joseph's College, Dumfries**

19. In 1981/82, when I was about 53, I had been doing a four year degree in special education for disabled kiddies in Hull University. I had been invalided out of the army after injuring my back in a parachute jump. My degree ended up taking five years because I had to take a year out to recover. I was sent to St Joseph's College in Dumfries just to fill a gap, to look after the senior boarders supervising their requirements when they were not in class, supervising their sports, meals, going to bed, getting them up in the morning. Generally looking after them, being a boarding master.
20. I travelled from Newcastle to Dumfries by train with my bike then cycled the last part of the journey to the college. I remember the boys thought I had cycled all the way from Newcastle. Brother MFY was SNR of St Joseph's and when I arrived he was refereeing a football match.
21. At half-time Brother MFY spoke to me, he called me Johnny, he never called me Angelo. He told me I would be taking over my duties immediately which was being in charge of the senior boarders of which there were between eighteen and twenty but there were day boys as well. They were aged between fourteen and seventeen. It was late in the evening when I arrived so when the game finished it was more or less time for bed so I just let the boys get on with it.
22. There were three groups of boys in St Joseph's. Juniors were aged 8 to 11, the middle school was aged 11 to 13 and then there were the senior boys. The senior boys each had their own cubicles which were in a large dormitory and I was allocated a room next to it.

*My role at St Joseph's Dumfries*

23. I was what was called a boarding master, or senior prefect, in charge of those boys in the senior group who boarded. Due to declining numbers the school was in the process of closing down and they were no longer taking in boarders. I was great with these boys, I'd just left the army and I was very fit. The boys were quite cheeky and they asked what they should call me. I told the boys that my name was John. I conducted myself army style, they did what I said. I told them we were going on a run the next morning. Anyway half of the boys turned out for a run and I told them we were going to mass afterwards. So the boys came to mass with me in their running kit. This had never been done before. The previous brother hadn't been in the physical shape to do activities like this and he didn't have the rapport with these guys. I got on great with them from the word go. The boys formed a kind of what looked like a protective body guard around me. I couldn't go anywhere without a group of them being around me.

*Management structure*

24. Brother MFY was SNR of the school. I recall that Brother MMK a big tall Scots man later became SNR. I would say there were at least another half dozen brothers though I don't recall their names.
25. There were also some teenagers who the Brothers employed as waiters who also helped clean the place. I think most of these teenagers came from unfortunate backgrounds and this was the Brothers' way of giving them some pocket money.



## **Routine and life at St Joseph's**

### *Daily routine*

26. The boys would get up about 8:00 am unless they were joining me for a run. In that case they would get up about 7:00 am and we would go for a run of about eight miles. There were usually six or seven who would join me and after it we would go to mass.
27. After getting up the boys would get washed, dressed then head down for breakfast. They would then head to school at 9:00 am where they would stay until lunch time before returning to school in the afternoon. While the boys were at school I was basically left to my own devices. I used to go for a long run or a run on my motor bike, I kept busy doing things. I had a plan to build a concrete boat to go down the river with the boys, it never happened in the end but the boys joined in and it was good fun. A few of the boys used to tag on to me to see what I was doing and I used to joke, "I'm looking after you".
28. When the boys finished school they would have an hour and a half to do what they liked during which time I would organise things for them to do or at least supervise whatever they were doing. I once got hold of an old army minibus which the boys helped me repair and do up and that became the minibus for the senior boys. My idea was to always keep the boys usefully busy.
29. The boys could also go into the local town at that point as long as they let me knew so as I would know where they were. A lot of them would also play football, or tennis or whatever at that time. The boys were always enthusiastic and kept active.
30. Between 6:00 pm and 8:00 pm the boys had prep time in their classes which again left me to my own devices as they would then be under the supervision of the teachers or Brothers. While the odd lay staff did this supervision it was nearly always the Brothers. There would then be the evening meal, at roughly 8:00 pm, followed by some time during which the boys would probably watch TV. In fact I got

reprimanded by the headmaster for letting them watch too much TV. They would be in bed for 10:00 pm. When I said, "Bed time boys and quiet" they would be quiet.

*Sleeping arrangements*

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As I said, the boys slept in separate cubicles and rooms in a large dorm and my room was just beside it. I think there were sixteen boys with about eight in individual cubicles and eight in individual rooms all contained within this one big dorm. I never encroached on those private areas unless they invited me in for a coffee which happened frequently. I was always available during the night if there were any problems but I have no recollection of problems ever arising during the night. This was probably because the boys were that bit older. Occasionally three or four boys would come in for coffee to my room where I had a sitting area. I never had one boy there on his own. Sometimes we'd be so busy chatting that the bell went for bedtime at 10:00 pm.

*Food*

32. The food was really good and I don't recall any problems with the boys not eating it. I always ate with them and would often share what I had with them like a sausage or an egg. I didn't have to share my food and I don't think anyone previously had done. When the boys got pie, chips and beans they might not eat all the pie. When that happened I would cut the parts that were left to remove any teeth marks and give what was left to the boys at night as a treat. I would take them on a tray up to the dormitories and give them tea and coffee with the leftover pie. They didn't know it was the stuff they hadn't eaten earlier and I just think they appreciated the fact that I did this. They would scoff the lot.



**Religious instruction**

33. The boys could go to mass every morning but it wasn't compulsory. Sunday mass was obligatory for Catholics though the school did take in some non-Catholic students and they weren't required to attend. I didn't count heads though so it was up to the boys to decide. There was a door at the side of the beautiful big church in Dumfries where the brothers used to enter. The boys were supposed to go through the front door. However I used to let the boys come in the side door. I didn't insist on the senior boys saying prayers at night or in the morning as I was of the view they were old enough to make that decision for themselves. Maybe that was lacking on my part.

**Discipline and punishment**

34. I have no recollection of seeing any of the boys getting corporal punishment. It's possible that the belt was used during school hours but I was never present when the boys were in class. I think in those days the belt was used quite rigorously in schools but I didn't have one and I never saw any of it. If the boys were punished they would be told to do chores like helping out in the kitchen. I never had any reason to get angry with the boys or to reprimand them. My way of disciplining in a previous school, which was a comprehensive school in Dundee was to give the boys a choice. I never gave the belt without the boys' permission. I said, "Do you want the belt, or something else?" They would always choose something else like a few lines or learning a poem by heart or something. If a boy had chosen the belt I used to take them outside and hit the belt against the wall so that it made a slapping sound. I used to tell the boys not to tell their friends that they hadn't had the belt at all. I'd just given them a bit of a fright but I never leathered a boy and I never belted anyone in St Josephs.

**Abuse in Champagne House, Dumfries – specific incidents witnessed or heard of by me**

Brother **MYT**

35. The nearest I came to seeing anything like abuse in my time was while I was studying at Champagne House. On that occasion Brother **MYT** seemed to lose the plot with one of the boys and slapped him with his hand. Brother **MYT** is long since dead. I don't recall what boy it was. Brother **MYT** was extremely sorry afterwards and very repentant. It was the very first and the very last time I saw a brother do anything like that.
36. I had only seen this from a distance and what I think had happened was that some boys had been playing around somewhere. Brother **MYT** must have thought they had been up to no good and called this one boy to him and I think the boy was being a bit cheeky. What I saw was the boy kneeling in front of Brother **MYT** who then gave the boy quite a whack on the head causing him to fall over. I saw Brother **MYT** with a hankie at the boy's ear after it and I think his ear was bleeding. I don't know how serious the bleeding was and I don't think he received any further medical treatment.

**Specific allegations of abuse against me**

37. As far as I am aware no boy ever made an allegation of abuse against me and I can think of no reason why they would. I have never been the subject of a police investigation and the only statement I have given to the police concerned the incident at Our Lady's Hermitage in Athlone which I only gave earlier this year.

**Leaving St Joseph's, Dumfries**

38. I was only in St Joseph's for an academic year and a bit. I had been travelling to Glasgow regularly to see an army doctor about my spinal injury when the Superior

said I should just move to a Marist house in Glasgow that the Order owned. So I did. It was called St Kentigern's.

39. Shortly after that a job came up with the Red Cross in Largs and the Order gave me permission to do it. It was taking care of disabled youngsters aged between about 17 and 22 and I was given the post of educational officer. While doing this I stayed in St Columba's in Largs though I was not part of the teaching community there. This was about July 1980 until the summer of 1982. These dates are approximate.
40. St Columba's was closing down and I started using the classrooms to help give the youngsters in my care some education. Prior to that they had only been receiving Occupational Therapy and the Red Cross were delighted that I was getting them some education. I was the person who drove the ambulance for the youngsters until they got a full-time driver. The youngsters themselves were in residential care, in Red Cross House in Largs, though I was not involved in that part of their care. There were some in wheelchairs, others on crutches as well as some who were severely epileptic.
41. My routine was, I was living in community with the brothers but not attached to the school. I'd get up, do morning prayer, go to the chapel, have mass then report to the Red Cross. I'd then take the ambulance, collect the boys and girls and take them to St Columba's to use the facilities there. Some of the older brothers loved working with these youngsters. Brother MYX was teaching them [REDACTED] and while I was teaching them geography and English, Brother Arthur taught them music. Red Cross were delighted because before this they were only getting tasks to do like packing boxes, things like that to keep them busy. These were morning sessions with the youngsters, they would go home in the afternoon.
42. Red Cross House was eventually closed down and the children were moved to Irvine which was a bit far for me to commute and it was about that time I was sent back to Africa. I probably worked in Largs with the Red Cross for almost two years.

AKU

43. While I was working with the Red Cross in Largs and staying at St Columba's, AKU was working at St Columba's. I didn't really have much to do with him other than now and again he would perhaps ask me to use the ambulance to transport the boys under his care to various places. However, this was very occasional as the children in my care needed the ambulance.
44. He would take them to the likes of Ardrossan and places like that but it was very occasional, maybe half a dozen times at the most. On these occasions he would ask me to drive the ambulance and I would go with them. He had a very strong command over the boys. They could be running wild one minute, whooping and yelling and shouting. He would shout one word and they would calm down. He had very good control over them. I would give him full marks for that. He seemed to like being in control of them in my opinion.
45. AKU stayed in that part of the building that housed his boys. He had a separate room from them.
46. At about that time St Columba's was also closing down and AKU was going off as he'd taken a job with somewhere. Prior to all of this AKU had been in charge of all the money. He had the cheque book which covered the community and the college. When the school closed down the acting Superior, Brother Arthur was going off to Ireland to be with family. So I was made second in command. Part of this involved me being responsible for the cheque book and I recall having an argument with AKU. He wanted the chequebook and I said, "No, I'm in charge of it". AKU wasn't too pleased about that as he had been the person responsible for the cheque book before that. In the end I just gave it to him but I don't know why he needed it.
47. I never really took to AKU though I couldn't give you a specific reason for it but, then again, I really had very little contact with him. At no time did I see him do anything that would be considered abusive to any boy. I would say that I was

impressed at how well he controlled the boys and he appeared to get on very well with them. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I never saw anything at St Columba's.

48.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

**Closing thoughts**

51. I am more for victims now and would hope that everyone who has suffered at the hands of others are suitably compensated for the distress that they have gone through and that perpetrators of such things are brought to justice.
52. 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..... 5 AUGUST 2019 .....