

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

CCB

Support person present: No

1. My name is CCB. My date of birth is 1974. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going to boarding school

2. I was an only child for years before my sister was born. I lived with my parents in near Glasgow. I went to the local primary school. There were lots of teachers' strikes and so on going on at that time. I think that was part of the decision not to send me to the local secondary school. That, in combination with my dad having been to Merchiston, resulted in the decision to send me away to Merchiston as a boarder. I was eleven when I went to Merchiston. I left the local primary school after primary seven.
3. I don't remember there being much discussion about whether I wanted to go. I don't remember being particularly keen on the idea of being sent away. I do remember that there was an interview before I went to Merchiston.

Merchiston Castle School, 294 Colinton Rd, Edinburgh

4. The school is in the grounds of Colinton Castle. Merchiston is all boys. There were not many females in the school. There were some female teachers. It was a very masculine culture. The school had houses separated off from the school building

itself. The houses were where you stayed as a boarder outside of classes. Merchiston had different houses depending on your age. The one I went into at the age of eleven was Pringle House. That was the junior house.

5. The things that prompted me to come and speak to the Inquiry all concern things that happened in and around my time at Pringle House. The things all explicitly relate to my housemaster there. That's where all my personal alarm bells ring. I don't think that I have any concerns about the school as I progressed through later on. There are no specific incidents I heard of, or was aware of, from my later time in the school and the higher up houses. I would go as far to say that had I not been in Pringle House I probably wouldn't have mentioned anything to the Inquiry.

Pringle House at Merchiston

6. Pringle House was slightly segregated from the school. I think it sat in what was formerly the Castle's walled gardens. Form two and form three were in Pringle House. I would say there were about fifty boys in Pringle House. I base that on a rough estimate of maybe twenty five to thirty boys in each form.
7. There was a main corridor in the building. On one side of the corridor the housemaster had a sort of study. I suspect the housemaster spent most of his time in there. On the other side of the corridor was the kitchen and the junk room. The kitchen was where people made cereal or whatever. Next to the kitchen was a kind of junk room. It was a work room but it was also full of junk. There was a workbench with tools. On one side of the room was a phone. On the other side was a bed where the housemaster slept.
8. The housemaster didn't have a flat as such. The junk room wasn't explicitly the housemaster's bedroom but he certainly slept there in amongst the house. It wasn't a private room as such. He lived very much in the boarding house.

Staff in Pringle House

9. James Rainy Brown was the housemaster of Pringle House. His nickname was JRB. JRB also taught Chemistry in the school. He was pretty much the only staff member present in Pringle House. He was the main staff member. He pretty much had a free reign.
10. Pringle House was physically separated from the school but I also suspect it was separate in terms of staffing. I don't have any recollection of any other staff really being there. I don't think that the other subject teachers really came down to the house from the school. I am not aware of any oversight by the school. The headmaster, for example, wouldn't come down to the house. I think he was very much a separate person.
11. The only other staff member I can think of who was in Pringle House during the day was Mrs Skinner. She was in charge of cleaning the place and attending to the laundry.
12. There were three or four prefects who came to Pringle House. They were boys in their last year of school. They were about seventeen. They had their own rooms in the boarding house where they studied. They worked in combination with JRB to administer the house. They would turn the lights off and that kind of thing.

Routine at Pringle House and Merchiston*First day and the first few weeks*

13. I arrived in Merchiston in September 1986. I was nearly twelve. My parents both came with me. I didn't know any of the other pupils there before I arrived. I have to admit I can't say that I enjoyed it on first arrival. I remember feeling as if it was an alien place. It was very different to the environment I had grown up in as an only child. It was quite austere relative to the house I had grown up in. I remember

things like there being no carpets. I remember it being very busy. There were lots of people coming in and out with trunks. It was very noisy. There were lots of boys tumbling together. It's funny that I now want to dismiss it but there was a feeling of being alone in a new environment.

14. Probably the person who would have been the first official I met was JRB. I remember then being taken to my dormitory. I was shown to my bed in the dorm and left to unpack. There were a few things in the car. I can't explicitly remember but I presume that my parents helped me unload my possessions to the dorm.
15. I was very unhappy for the first few weeks I was there. I was always on the phone to my mum asking her to take me back. I presume my parents didn't respond. I assume from the fact I stayed that nothing happened. I don't know whether it was my parents' or the school's attitude but I have a feeling there was an approach of "leave them alone for a couple of months and they will come round to it". The attitude towards the new boys being upset was "they will get over it" kind of thing.
16. I remember early on that my parents came to visit. As my parents were leaving I was held back by JRB. I remember being restrained. I don't know whether I wanted to chase after the car or something. I don't know whether I explicitly told JRB that I was unhappy. You would assume that he inferred from that incident that I wasn't happy as I was kicking and screaming.

Daily routine

17. We got up at maybe 7:00am or 7:15am. It wasn't ridiculously early. I can't remember the details but there may have been a bell. You would get woken up and then you would get dressed. Then you would then go up the main drive to the school. You would have breakfast in the main dining hall. I was in the school choir. It had its practice at about 8:15am. I went to that straight after breakfast. Practice went on until about 9:00am. That was when the first lesson would have been. We had a break at about 11:00am. The lessons then went on to about 1.00pm. After that there was "games". It was typically rugby. On Mondays, Wednesdays and

Fridays there were lessons which ran between 4:00pm and 6:00pm after games. Dinner would happen after that. It would be had in the dining hall.

18. After dinner was "prep". Prep was essentially homework. In the later years that was done in the main school's classrooms. I can't remember where prep was done in Pringle House. In the later years prep lasted two hours between about 7:00pm and 9:00pm. In earlier years it was maybe a bit less but I can't honestly remember.
19. Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, after games, was "free time". That would run from 3:30pm, or whenever games finished, until 6:00pm. Typically you were allowed to go into Colinton village. I think you had to ask permission. You were allowed to go and get sweets or whatever.
20. There were lessons on a Saturday morning. Saturday afternoon were typically spent watching the First XV play rugby. You had to stand there looking enthused and all that type of thing. Saturday evenings were free.
21. On Sunday mornings you went to the church service in the school. That went on until 11:30am or something like that. After that you would be free. Probably every other Sunday my dad would come and take me home. I would come back about 8:00pm. On Sundays, when I was not home, the housemaster would take us on trips. I remember JRB organising trips to Cameron Toll and other places. JRB was the only staff member in the boarding house at weekends.

Sleeping arrangements and bed-wetting

22. The dormitory had about seven beds. Mine was in the corner. The dorms didn't have wardrobes. There were lockers outside. There was a little table by your bed. It was more a bedside table. I don't recall there being anything like a desk.
23. I can't remember when "lights out" was. JRB was certainly around during the night. I think either JRB or the prefects came in if there was noise in the dorms. I do recall

JRB coming in and saying "be quiet". I don't know how it worked but both JRB and the prefects would attend to things.

24. I do remember the beds were quite uncomfortable. The mattresses were made of vinyl. I think that was to make them easier to clean if there was a bed-wetter. Bed-wetting isn't something that comes to mind though.

Washing and bathing

25. There was a room that had three sinks and three toilet cubicles. It had three baths in it. I don't think I ever saw someone else taking a bath. There were communal showers with about eight showerheads. I can't remember exactly when you had to have showers, but you certainly did that after you played rugby. People didn't generally have showers in the mornings.

Phone and phone calls home

26. There was a phone and there was a book which you had to write in when you made a phone call. I suspect the phone was for the whole house. I have a recollection that the phone was in a room on its own during the first year. In my second year the phone was placed in the junk room where JRB slept. There wasn't much privacy when using this phone. People would come in and out of the room whilst you were on the phone. That meant that it was possible that sometimes you were overheard.
27. I don't think there were any restrictions on phoning back home. You didn't need coins or anything. I don't have any recollection of explicitly having to ask to make a phone call home. I suspect I wanted to phone home more than I actually did.

Food

28. The meals were all taken away from the boarding house. My recollection of the food was that it wasn't like stringy meat. It was more like meaty string. I do remember the person in charge of catering was kind of large, and would come over and say

something if you weren't eating your dinner. I can't say I was a particular fan of the school dinners. I suspect you could leave food if you wanted to. I think you probably could do that because I remember surviving on a diet of mainly Mars Bars.

Leisure and activities

29. There was a television. I think that was only allowed on at certain times. I remember videos being put on on Saturday nights. There were computers in one of the rooms in the house. People would play computer games on them. I don't recall any restrictions on what you could do in your free time. You did have to be on the school grounds unless it was Tuesdays and Thursdays. If you were out on Tuesdays and Thursdays you had to ask permission. When you were older you were allowed to go into Edinburgh on a Saturday afternoon. I don't think you were allowed to do that when you were younger.

Friends and fellow boarders in the house

30. I think I got on okay with the people in my dorm. I'm still in touch with one person who was in the same dorm as me. I don't recall having any big fights.

Visits/Inspections

31. I do recall times where there were inspections. There was a lot of time spent tidying things up. There were times when we had to be on our best behaviour because the inspectors were coming. We were certainly warned to act appropriately. I never met any inspectors on a "one to one" basis or anything like that.

Healthcare

32. There were matrons that dealt with medical stuff in the school. They had more of a medical role than a "looking after role".

General discipline

33. The prefects were involved with discipline. I don't think they caned anyone or anything like that. I don't think there was any physical discipline. There was, however, a punishment called "blue paper". It was basically lines or writing an essay. If you were punished you would get "four sides", or however many sides, given to you. You had to get the paper from the housemaster and then you had to write the lines or whatever out. I think that was the sort of punishment that the prefects dished out.
34. I don't think there was corporal punishment. I do have vague memories of something to do with a cricket bat. It's not something I experienced but there was something surrounding threats by JRB and a cricket bat. It's not something I remember experiencing myself.

Abuse at Merchiston and Pringle House

35. When I talk about the things that happened I feel quite conflicted. There is still a strong voice within me that says "It is nothing. Stop being a wimp. Stop complaining about it". That is interesting in itself. To my mind I think that I wasn't properly abused. However, the stuff that did happen has affected me. If the things that happened occurred now then I think that parents would be upset. They wouldn't view it as acceptable.

Abuse and incidents outside of Pringle House

36. JRB was a Chemistry teacher. He had a sort of disregard for safety. We were doing the thing where you put sodium in water and it fizzes around. I know in later years there was a regard to safety with this experiment because other teachers used to put a plastic screen up. JRB was very much of the "safety is girls stuff" school of thought. Being "a girl" was one of the worst things that you could be at the school. JRB didn't use a screen and something spat out and landed in one of the boys' eyes.

The boy was okay but it certainly stung a bit. I think the boy went out and washed his eye in a wash basin in the toilet. I don't recall him being taken to Accident and Emergency. I mention this not as an example of something that is harmful in itself, or something that should ring alarm bells, but I do think it provides an indication of the attitude towards safety in general. It speaks to JRB a bit.

37. JRB would sometimes take rugby. I have to admit that I did my utmost not to play rugby. When you played rugby you weren't allowed to wear pants under your shorts. I do recall wondering why we weren't allowed to wear pants. When you played your bits would drop out. I don't recall whether this was a rule throughout the school or specifically when JRB was taking rugby. All I recall is being told that I wasn't allowed to wear pants. It may be inconsequential. I don't recall being particularly bothered by it. I mention it just as it was one of those things that has left me thinking now "what was going on there?" and "that was a bit weird".
38. JRB used to take boys on outings to the Pentlands. Whether it was for exercise or just a trip out I don't know. I didn't take part in the outings myself. All of these outings were with him only. He was the only staff member. I remember that some of the boys who came back would say that they had been skinny dipping in the reservoirs that were in the Pentlands. It may be of no consequence but as an adult now I ask myself "Why didn't he make them take swimming trunks?" We all had swimming trunks. If that was now you would be made to take swimming trunks with you. A teacher wouldn't go out with a bunch of boys to reservoirs and tell them to take their clothes off.

Abuse and incidents in Pringle House

39. During my second term I remember a boy in my dorm being very upset. He was crying quite loudly. It was the first night of term. I remember thinking "he's very upset so I shall go to the housemaster and tell him". I remember going to JRB. He was still up in his study. I remember JRB shouting at me for being out of bed. He told me to get back to bed. I think I was then really upset and frightened. I went

back to my bed. The boy was still crying. I have a recollection of pulling the covers over me and hiding away.

40. There was a general culture of making boys run around naked. That may or may not be something. Looking back I ask myself "Why did we have to run around naked?" Being naked in itself might have been part of the culture then. However, as an adult now, were I to go into an institution and there was a teacher making young boys run around naked I'd have to ask "What is going on?" I don't know whether the whole boys running around naked thing is a problem or not. However, I do recall that JRB had a propensity to watch the boys when they were naked.
41. I remember one time that we had been playing rugby. We came back to the house. There was a drying room in the house. For whatever reason that day we had to put our stuff in the drying room. JRB made three of us take our stuff off in the drying room itself. The three of us had to get naked in that room whilst JRB was there. We then had to run naked through to where the shower was. The fact that this happened only once doesn't make sense to me. Rugby stuff got messy all the time. We would get changed and then put all our stuff in the room to get dried out. It may have been something that was harmless, I don't know. I don't know why we had to do it that day and why it happened only once. It doesn't make sense to me.
42. At Halloween we would duck for apples. The ducking for apples took place in the bathroom. JRB would fill one of the baths up with water and apples. He would stand in the bathroom and make the boys come into the bathroom to duck for apples whilst naked. JRB stood in a position such that he would view our naked bottoms as we bent over.
43. We would have got undressed in the locker room next door. I do remember bending over and JRB watching me. He was the only person present. It was just him. I don't recall this being done under duress. It was maybe just what you did, an activity.
44. I honestly can't remember how it came about. All I remember is JRB standing there in nothing but a skimpy towel watching us. It was quite a small towel. I don't recall

JRB generally walking around in a towel at other times. I just recall him being there in the towel during the ducking for apples and the cold bath incident.

45. At the time I wasn't bothered by it. I think I thought that was just what you did. It wasn't really something that was remarked upon at the time. There's nothing that I remember to suggest that JRB was aroused. I don't believe I am bothered by it now. I don't think the ducking for apples thing particularly disturbed me. I have no memory of that. It may have been harmless. I don't know. It was certainly unusual. Looking back it was a strange thing.
46. Some boys masturbated in the changing room. There was no privacy. One time, in the older year, after rugby, there was a boy who had nothing on but a rugby top. He was getting changed. I don't know whether he was half getting changed but he was certainly playing with himself. I don't know what happened but somehow JRB came in. The boy pulled his rugby top down when JRB came in. It was still quite visible what the boy had been doing. I remember JRB saying "What have you been doing?" to the boy and the boy saying "Nothing nothing". JRB then said "lift up your top" I can't remember whether the boy or JRB then lifted up the top. JRB then stared at the boy's erection for a while before pulling the boy's top down. It seems strange to me that JRB would do that when it was quite obvious what the boy had been doing. JRB clearly wanted to see this twelve year old boy's erection. It was more than just a "has he been masturbating?" thing. JRB was studying the boy's genitals.
47. The thing that affected me more directly was the cold bath treatment that JRB meted out on me. I think it only happened once to me. The cold bath thing is the thing that is most alarming to me. I have no idea how it came about that I was to be placed in the cold bath. The cold bath was presumably a punishment for something. I have no clue as to what I had done.
48. It took place early in the morning. I got up early. It was probably on a school day. It was done whilst everyone was asleep. I can't remember how I got up. I believe that I took off my pyjamas in the dormitory, left them on my bed and walked naked down

the corridor to the room where the baths were. The room was very 'spartan' and the window was open.

49. I think the bath was already filled. JRB was there. He was standing there kind of in the corner. He was there with his towel on. He was naked apart for the towel. I don't know why he was there with just a towel on. I don't recall him speaking much but that might be just my memory. There was quite an atmosphere of sternness and coldness. There was definitely not a sense of "Oh, morning CCB. Let's get this over with. I don't want to do this". I then had to get into the bath. I can't remember how long I sat in the bath. My recollection is feeling really cold and numb. I was shivering. I was vulnerable and naked. I wasn't enjoying the experience. I wanted to be let out. I recall begging "Can I get out now?" and was told "no you have to stay in". Obviously I hadn't been punished enough because, for whatever reason, I wasn't allowed to get out. Presumably after what had passed I was allowed to get out. I remember getting out, shivering, and going to the locker room to get my towel.
50. Looking back on this as an adult, I believe that there was a power relationship between him and me as an eleven year old. I wasn't physically touched nor was I made to touch him. However, I do believe that there might have been a sexual element. It is kind of hard for me to justify why I think this, but I believe he quite enjoyed having a naked eleven year old boy beg for him. I think he enjoyed the power he had over me. There was almost an enjoyment for him in watching me shivering and begging. It was certainly quite an austere experience. Looking back at it now it would have been quite possible, in that situation where nobody else was around and him enjoying the power thing, for things to have gone further.
51. The cold bath thing was certainly there as a punishment. I don't recall JRB talking to me about it. It may have been threatened but I just don't know.
52. A school friend has recently told me that he and another boy also received cold baths. He said that after that he tried to have lots of cold baths. He thinks, looking back, and he is not sure why, that might have been some sort of coping mechanism for him.

Leaving Pringle House

53. The year after I left Pringle House I went to Chalmers West House. Chalmers West House had a different housemaster. The house was in a different physical location within the school grounds. Although the housemaster lived in the building he had a separate flat. The housemaster didn't live, as JRB did, more or less in amongst the boys.
54. There was another teacher who lived in another flat in the house. He wasn't the housemaster but he would come in once a week to help out when the housemaster was having his night off. There were two staff members around. That was different from Pringle House. Pringle House was very much isolated.

Reporting of abuse at Pringle House

55. All the "pastoral care" was done by JRB. If there was a problem then JRB was the only one you could report things to. There wasn't a system as such. JRB was the only one you could speak to by virtue of him being the only one there.
56. The prefects were there in a monitoring role. They dealt with issues of discipline. Their role was very much authoritarian.
57. There was nobody at the school I could have spoken to. It was possible that I could have spoken to people in the school, but actually doing it was a different thing. I think I probably could have said something but the culture was "don't". It was all the "stiff upper lip" kind of stuff. The worst thing that might happen is that you could be seen as "a girl". Not reporting was very much part of that.
58. There was a different ethos between the men and the women in the school. There were only a small number of female teachers and a couple of female matrons. They

would probably have been the people that I would have spoken to if I'd had to. I don't know whether that was because, as an eleven year old, I would have been more likely to speak to my mum than my dad.

59. I don't think it was ever explicitly stated to me that I shouldn't say anything. There was no explicit rule. However, it was very implicit. There were things that made you learn that you don't tell anyone about your problems. There were things that made you learn not to show your emotions. The incident where I went to JRB and told him about the other boy crying is an example of this.
60. Nothing comes to mind in terms of "one to ones" between the boys and other people not in the presence of the housemaster. You may have spoken to an English teacher after class but there was no formal set up. Even if there had been someone formally there I don't think it would have helped. I don't think it would have helped because, back then, I felt that nothing untoward had happened. I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have had anything to say if someone had come up to me and asked. Maybe I would have said that I had had a cold bath, but I wouldn't have seen anything untoward happening in and around the incident.
61. At the time it was "normal" and I didn't feel as if I had anything to mention. At the time it was sort of pushed down. There was very much a culture of pushing down things. The environment was such that if you had been told not to say anything to anyone then you probably wouldn't have.
62. I would have mentioned the bath incident to my parents. I have no recollection of mentioning it to other pupils, but I am sure that I would have at the time.
63. After JRB's suicide I discussed the cold bath incident with another school friend. We were trying to figure out what had happened to cause JRB to commit suicide. We talked about our own experiences of JRB. I mentioned the cold bath incident to my friend. We couldn't understand it.

Reporting to the police

64. I heard in 2013 that JRB had been accused of some form of abuse, was being investigated by the police and had committed suicide. I first heard that from an ex-teacher I am friendly with. I later on heard about it in the press. That was probably the first time I really started to think about this stuff. I started to actually feel quite angry that this was the first time that something like this had come to light.
65. I knew, from general knowledge, that sometimes these sorts of cases are quite difficult to prove. I knew that it could quite often be one person's word against another. I thought that I would report to the police the stuff that felt "kind of dodgy". I thought that my evidence might add weight to something that the accuser might have said.
66. I met the police sexual offences unit at their offices in South Gyle. The interview room was set up for people who had been raped or similar. I remember it had a bathroom. The investigation was part of a more general operation which I can't remember the name of. I don't remember the officers' names who I spoke to. I gave the police pretty much the same kind of statement that I have provided to the Inquiry.
67. I think that the police officially said that their role was that of protecting the public. They said that they were satisfied, by virtue of JRB committing suicide, that he posed no risk. There was a slight "off the record" acknowledgment that JRB had done something but they weren't at liberty to explain further.
68. I remember that the police had questions about other activities that I had not been aware of. I think they asked me about a camp called Rua Fail. I can't however remember the exact name. The police were intrigued to know more about those trips. I couldn't help because I had never visited the camp. I do remember reading in the papers later on that someone from the Morningside area had been arrested for abusing boys at a camp that had a similar name to the camp the police had mentioned to me.

69. Another thing that the police asked me about was boys being made to sit naked outside on a bench outside of Pringle House's kitchen. I did remember the bench but I didn't remember there being boys sat naked on it.

Impact

70. I think one of the effects of the school, and this type of institution in general, was that you grew up as a teenager separated from girls. I don't know whether regret is the word but I regret not having that when I was at the school.
71. To be honest, when I left the school, I wasn't aware of how I had been affected. I'd internalised things, and probably wouldn't have said anything back then if you'd asked me. That's not to say that I didn't react in certain ways to things. It's more that I wasn't aware that I had been affected.
72. What I am aware of is the effect on some of my peers from the school. When they went to university they kind of went wild. I got the feeling that people from other schools were fairly well adjusted at that point but they weren't. I don't know whether that was just them "letting loose".
73. For the last ten years or so I have been suffering from tense muscles. I have recently learnt that repressed emotions can be related to tense muscles. I now wonder whether my tense muscles can be related back to my experiences at school.
74. I'm very anxious about separation. My partner is quite understanding. Sometimes I will wake up in the night really anxious that she has gone away. I feel bad about this, but I also feel it is important to acknowledge that the anxiety is there. I am quite anxious. I do suspect, in terms of the anxiety about her going away, it may be related to my time at school. I would quite like to look at that further.
75. Before speaking to the Inquiry I was speaking with my partner about my time at school. It is really interesting that I started to feel really angry. There's clearly stuff

there that I need to resolve. The anger is something that I have become aware of in the last few years. It is hard for me to say whether that has been there between the point of leaving school and me becoming aware.

76. I'm very eager to explore how to deal with how I have been affected. I haven't spoken to anybody about the impact. I'd quite like to speak to someone to explore what is going on. I haven't yet sought any assistance from my GP or any type of counselling service. I think that would be of help to me. If I am honest, my motivation to seek help has been tempered with this feeling of "there's nothing wrong".

Records

77. I have no idea whether a record was kept of discipline. The very fact that you had to get this special blue paper from the housemaster meant that he was informed. I have no idea whether that was recorded. I have never thought about getting my records.
78. I do feel slightly upset by the place. I would like to know what was going on. I would like to know whether it was just me. I'm very curious about what I did to get this cold bath treatment. I have no idea about what I had done. I would be interested to know that, but I haven't really thought about getting records to see what is there.

Abuse discussed by my father concerning his time at Merchiston

79. I recall talking with my dad. My dad was at Merchiston between 1960 and 1964. My father was in Chalmers West House. He was about fourteen when he was in that house. My dad mentioned a housemaster by the name of Mervyn Preston. The story he told me was that this housemaster liked what he called some of "the prettier boys". My father told me that Mervyn Preston would invite some of these boys up to his bathroom whilst he was having a bath. My dad said that the boys would be

naked with the housemaster whilst he was having a bath. That's all my dad said to me.

80. I occasionally bump into an ex-teacher who taught at Merchiston. This ex-teacher has talked with me quite a bit about the school and his theories on things that have happened there. Somehow we must have started emailing each other. I think I forwarded an email between the ex-teacher and me on to my dad. I think that may be how my dad and the ex-teacher got each other's email addresses. They then, it would appear, started corresponding with each other.
81. I was recently talking with this ex-teacher. I discovered that my dad had told this ex-teacher more than he had told me. The ex-teacher told me that what Mervyn Preston did was "way out of the bounds of what is acceptable." I don't know what it was that Mervyn Preston did. The ex-teacher didn't go into any further detail.

Other information


82. What intrigues me about the stuff I experienced at Merchiston is that I am left with the feeling that I am very much wasting people's time talking about it. I think part of the reason I feel that way is because of the ethos of the school. The ethos was "be a man", "stiff upper lip", "hide your emotions" and all that type of thing. Those things have coloured the way I see things. The ethos has created a culture of not wanting to talk. I feel that I am breaking that ethos now. That is part of why I want to talk now.
83. It's kind of funny that I think that what I experienced is kind of normal. A hesitancy to talk comes from that. It almost feels, to a certain extent, something like Stockholm Syndrome. You are made to think "oh but it was a good school". However, equally, I have no qualms about saying that some of the things that happened were wrong. I still very much believe it wasn't "proper abuse" but I am happy to speak out if it provides any evidence that may help get a clearer view of the jigsaw as a whole.

84. The culture at the school in general was very much “man up”. You couldn’t show emotion. That was my observation of the culture in general. You couldn’t show weakness. I’d almost say that that culture was normalised and became more normal as you went up through the school.
85. I feel now, looking back, that the culture of the place was very insular. Some of the teachers used to be pupils at the school. An example of this would be JRB. I know JRB was a pupil there, went to university in Edinburgh and then immediately returned as a teacher. There was an attitude that we shouldn’t mix with people, like those who went to the local high school, outside of school. There was a feeling of “we are *the* institution” going on. I don’t think I have a concern as such about that but, as an observation from my time there, I could see that if cases of abuse were to happen it would mean that it would be kept within the walls. You wouldn’t want to say anything against the “good name” of the school.
86. I do think that had there been more of a variety of people at the school it would have been quite helpful. Maybe the school later on wasn’t so bad because the school had teachers who were married, had their own families and had their own homes and so on. They had lives outside the school.
87. The danger of Pringle House was that there was one housemaster with one culture. Whether this “man up” kind of thing was purely JRB I don’t know. It could be because he had been at the school in a very different time to when he returned as a housemaster. If there had been a woman housemaster there I do not think that she would have said that being “a girl” was the worst thing there was. It would have meant that things weren’t so insular as there would have been more variety. I think the house system tended to encourage very institutionalised people. By virtue of them being institutionalised they wanted to be in the institution. The system was a bit incestuous in that way.
88. Although I have no direct evidence, other than what I have said, I do believe that JRB posed a threat. Obviously that threat has now gone but that threat existed when he was alive. Certainly at the time, because he was the only adult in the

house, there were plenty of opportunities, should he have wanted to, to do something. There were no apparent mechanisms for reporting problems. Although it didn't happen to me at the time, I suspect that if JRB had asked me to do something I probably would have obliged. The relationship was such that he was in charge, he was everything and you had to do what he wanted.

89. In hindsight, looking back, I definitely think there should be a way to allow boys to speak to people other than the housemaster. However, I don't think that that would be enough because of this culture of "nothing happened". It would be easy to put in place someone or some sort of grievance process. However, without the underlying change in culture to encourage boys to talk, any person or process would be no good.
90. At the time, there was a very strange attitude towards women. I did sense, during my time there that some of the staff were ill at ease around women. The worst thing you could be was "a girl". As an adult in the world I don't see that as healthy. I don't know whether or not that attitude has continued. I think that if it had been mixed it may have helped. I don't see the advantage of it being single sex.
91. I haven't really corresponded with the school in many years but I do occasionally read the website. I do sense the culture I have talked about is still there. I do suspect that the culture I have talked about still exists. I do worry that strict discipline and discouraging emotional expression does lead to some sort of unhealthy outcome.
92. My view is that one of the difficulties the Inquiry may have is that, based on my experience from thirty years ago; the school views itself as above the law. I suspect the view will be "Oh we have got to deal with all this namby pamby stuff about abuse." That kind of attitude might still be there. I could be wrong but certainly based on my time there, and possibly what I have seen since, there is an attitude of "We are the good guys. We don't need to deal with these meddling guys who come to inspect us. We know better. We will tell them what they need to hear".

93. I suspect that any outcome of the Inquiry may be viewed by the school as not applying to them. I don't know what the answer is to that but that is what I anticipate. I would hope that there is a change that it is viewed by the school that this stuff matters. It isn't just someone whinging. These things have a real effect on people. There are real long term consequences.
94. I'm very interested in learning what has happened. The fact that JRB committed suicide has led me to wonder what actually happened. That's gone round in mind. Almost for my own peace of mind I want to know what else happened at the school and whether or not it was just me.
95. 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...  CCB

Dated... 14th October 2017