

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

CCZ [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is CCZ [REDACTED] My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1952. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going to Merchiston Castle School

2. I was adopted. My adopted parents were called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They are both dead now. I have one sister called [REDACTED]. She is eighteen months younger than me. The family home was in Stranraer. In many ways it was a happy relatively middle class upbringing.
3. My father was a builder. He had come up to work for the Stranraer branch of a building company. He eventually became a partner. Whilst he was in Stranraer he met my mother. My mother was local to the area. I was adopted in 1952. My sister was adopted eighteen months later.
4. Growing up I came to realise that my parents had quite a restrictive social circle. My father was very English and didn't drink. I think that put him at odds with the farming community of Stranraer. I don't know whether you could call it a tension but there was an awareness that my father employed many of my friend's parents. We also lived in a [REDACTED] house that my father had built himself. [REDACTED]. I suppose we were very much categorised as middle class and separate from the rest of the community.

5. I suspect that my father's boss and partner was partly behind me getting sent to public school. He sent his sons to Gordonstoun. I think that he was involved in trying to get me admitted to Gordonstoun. I remember being violently opposed to the idea. I didn't want to leave Stranraer as I had friends in Stranraer. I was doing reasonably well at the local high school. It was the only life I knew. Fortunately for me Gordonstoun required you to sit an entrance exam which I successfully deliberately screwed up.
6. For reasons unknown to me there were a number of families in Stranraer who sent their boys to Merchiston. My father, perhaps influenced and helped by his senior partner, then came up with the idea of sending me to Merchiston. My memory of it is vague but there was an entrance exam for Merchiston. I suspect there was an interview with the housemaster, Mervyn Preston. I don't remember anything about the day itself. Unfortunately for me the entrance qualifications for Merchiston were far less onerous than Gordonstoun. I remember doing my best not to pass. I seemed to fail abysmally at doing that. I was thus dispatched to Merchiston with another boy from a different primary school in Stranraer called [REDACTED].

#### **Merchiston Castle School, Colinton, Edinburgh**

7. I ended up in Merchiston in September 1965. I ultimately left in 1968. Merchiston was all boys. There were between 240 and 250 boys in the school. I would say there was approximately eighteen to twenty members of staff.
8. The school is in Colinton just outside of Edinburgh. As you go in there is a sanatorium next to the main gates. In the middle is the main school building. It is an imposing building set on its own grounds. To the rear of that building is a kitchen joined to the main building by the dining hall. Next to that was the maid and domestic staff quarters. There was then a room that held the boilers and that sort of thing. Right behind that was a swimming pool.

9. The terms basically followed a month behind the state school system. I think that had something to do with the colonial period.

*Prep school*

10. Merchiston didn't have a prep year house when I was there. I believe it now has one called Pringle House. When I was there there were some unofficial prep feeder schools. I think a place that sounded like St Marys was one of them. I can't remember the names of the rest. I think there were two or three others. Some of the boys in my year had gone to those schools and formed social groups before they had arrived at Merchiston.

*Houses*

11. There were four residential blocks separate from the main building named Chalmers West, Chalmers East, Rogerson West and Rogerson East. It was a formal fairly segregated house system. Your year was self-contained within the one house. There was obviously a bit of flow between the houses where there were multiple boys from one family in the school. There were various social groups in the school. Those informal social groups would also span across multiple houses.
12. Every year you moved into a different house. It was aged based. Chalmers West was for the first year pupils, Chalmers East was for the second year pupils and Rogerson East and West were for the third year pupils and seniors respectably. The final year of my time in Merchiston was in Rogerson East. That's where I remained until I left.
13. Chalmers West held about sixty four or sixty five boys. I suspect that the layout is much the same now. In the basement there was a boot room. The ground floor consisted of a changing room, shower room and a common room. There was also the housemaster's quarters which consisted of a bedroom, bathroom and a living room. On the first floor there were two dormitories. At the back of one of the dormitories was a house annex where the housekeeper lived. The deputy house

housemaster also had quarters on that floor. There was also a bathroom for the boys. The third floor was much the same as the second floor. There were two dormitories. There may have been some storage space also. There were only one or two members of staff in the block supervising at night time.

*Staff - headmasters*

14. At a school like Merchiston, at that time, the headmaster role was almost a papal position. The headmaster when I arrived was called Mr Bush. I remember him being a kindly sort of fellow. Unfortunately, he was an alcoholic. I remember him taking a class and regaling us with his rendition of "Pamela Pamela" by Wayne Fontana & The Mindbenders. He was dismissed or retired a year into my time at Merchiston. I think health reasons were cited. He was replaced by Mervyn Preston. Mervyn Preston was still in his role of acting headmaster when I left.

*Staff – housemasters*

15. There were four housemasters. Each housemaster lived in one of the houses. Their living quarters were situated on the first floor of their houses. All the housemasters were also teachers.
16. Mervyn Preston was my housemaster in Chalmers West. He would have been in his late fifties or early sixties when I started at Merchiston. He looked like a portlier version of the English football manager Alf Ramsay. He was about five foot ten, stout and had a big gut. He had receding hair. He had rather a toadyish face. He came across as quite a powerful character who was at the top of the pecking order in terms of staff. I remember Preston giving the strong impression to my parents that he looked out for me but, in reality, I don't think he ever did that.
17. William Donaldson was the housemaster in charge of Chalmers East. He was quite a strange individual. I can remember attending a Sunday school scripture class where he gave a seminar. He told us all about how his rugby career had come to an



end and how he had become a serial masturbator. He told us that that had carried on until he found Christianity and, I think, a woman.

18. My housemaster in Rogerson East was a man called Balfour Paul. He was my last housemaster. He was quite a kindly soul. He was a kind of rugged, thoughtful, gentle kind of man. His natural demeanour rendered him quite a likeable fellow. I think he had been in the East during the war. He used to wander around the house late at night in his shorts smoking a pipe. I think he was just an insomniac. He seemed to be quite a reasonable fellow despite the wandering around in his shorts when he couldn't get to sleep.
19. I remember that there was another housemaster by the name of CDS [REDACTED] I am not certain that was his name as it could have been CDS [REDACTED] He was also a teacher. I think he was housemaster for a couple of years in Chalmers West before moving to Rogerson West. He wasn't a housemaster in any of the houses I was in when I was there but he was at the school at the same time as me. He left during my time in Merchiston.
20. I seem to recall that there was always a problem with housemasters in Rogerson West. I think the last housemaster they got in Rogerson West whilst I was there was a person by the name of Thomson. I think he was forced into doing it. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
I think he was also a relative of a teacher by the name of Mair.
21. There always seemed to be a tension between Balfour Paul and Donaldson and, on the other side, Preston. They just seemed to keep their distance from one another. All the other teachers would socialise with one another apart from Preston. He would only socialise with his cohort. That may have been something. That may have been nothing. Preston was the one out of them that was the most powerful.

*Staff – deputy housemasters*

22. Each house had a deputy housemaster. They would live on the second floor of the house. The deputy housemaster in Chalmers West was a man called James Rainy Brown. He would have been in his twenties when I was there. He was very serious and quite righteous. He was a gaunt strange man. He was very athletic. He'd come from prep school, gone to Merchiston, went to Edinburgh University for three years then came back as a teacher at Merchiston. He was an incredibly introverted character. However, he opened up with people who were from the same prep school as he had been to as a child. I think he felt a bit more relaxed with people from the Borders.
23. Rainy Brown was a very junior member of staff. He was one of Mervyn Preston's followers. If Mervyn Preston asked him to jump he would say "how far?" He was just an enforcer really. He was one step up from a prefect. He obviously loathed everything myself and my peers stood for. He obviously idolised the whole concept of life in Merchiston. We absolutely hated it. Unfortunately, he was the one in authority and he was the one who wielded the cane.
24. Rainy Brown was amazingly scared of women. One of my friends saw him talking to the matron. He saw that Rainy Brown's hands were behind his back whilst talking to her. He looked as if he was in turmoil. He was clinching and clenching his hands in tension. We realised that he had a problem with women and would get embarrassed in their company. After realising that we endeavoured to encourage sisters and female relatives to speak to him. We did that especially around rugby matches. We would watch his behaviour from a distance.
25. I read somewhere that Rainy Brown ultimately got caught up in some sort of paedophile accusation. That doesn't fit with my memory of the sort of things he was involved in. My memory of him is of him being an enforcer. He was the one who physically punished people.

*Staff - teachers*

26. At the bottom of the pecking order were the teachers. It was all male in terms of the teachers. They were mainly teachers from grammar schools in England. As far as I can recall most of them were eminently reasonable.
27. There was an apartheid between the teachers. There were the jobbing teachers and the teachers who also had responsibilities attached to the houses. The jobbing teachers weren't inclined to get involved in anything else other than teaching. There were cliques between certain teachers. In amongst them there was what I would call a fifth column of younger teachers who were followers of Mervyn Preston.
28. Mair was one of the teachers at the school. He was formidable and hard. He had been at Arnhem. He carried a wound from that. In terms of the pecking order he seemed to be level in terms of the pecking order with Mervyn Preston. There appeared to be some sort of a divide between the two.
29. There was an English teacher called Smith who was fine. I didn't have him much to do with him. There was a Maths teacher from Manchester called McLean who was also fine. There was an Arts teacher called Scobie who was also fine. The science teacher was called Patterson. He was also fine. There was one overtly gay teacher called BRW [REDACTED]. He used to smoke cigars. I think the maths teacher was called Mr Gibson. He gave the impression that he was an alcoholic. He was barely coherent when he taught.
30. There was a fellow called Houston who used to be an Irish rugby international. I don't think he was much good for anything else. He was a teacher of sorts. I think he had only been put on the staff because he could coach rugby.

*Staff – other staff*

31. In the latter years there was someone called CDR [REDACTED] who joined as a house [REDACTED]. I think his first name was CDR [REDACTED]. He came in about 1967. We heard he was

another one of Mervyn Preston's protégés. I vaguely recall a conversation where the boys heard he had been brought in by Preston. He was a very small man. He would have been only about four foot ten. He was a very inadequate little man. He had a big chip on his shoulder. He adopted a camp site manner. It was all "you can sit down and tell me your woes." We checked him out to discover that he wasn't very welcoming to us. I think, in hindsight, that was because there was nobody in our group that could be considered vulnerable. In my opinion he was acting in cahoots with Preston. It felt as if there was an obvious fraternity there.

32. In Chalmers West there was a housekeeper. She was a middle aged woman who looked after the laundry and the domestic staff. I don't remember her name. The housekeeper stayed on the second floor of the house at the back. They lived in a sort of bedsit.
33. There was a very crusty matron. I can't remember her name. She was not particularly attractive. I don't know how old she was but she was old when I was there. She might have been in her fifties. I doubt she would be alive now.
34. There was a secretary who worked in the office called Anderson. She was a two faced old hag. She latterly had an assistant called Mary. Mary was quite a bright Dubliner. She was part of the fraternity of maids that you could build up a relationship with.

### **Routine at Merchiston Castle School**

#### *First day*

35. On my first day, my parents dropped me off. I remember Mervyn Preston ingratiating himself with my parents. I suppose, because they were from working class origins, they were suitably impressed by him. I can't remember specifically what happened on my first day but I do remember how I felt. I felt desperately unhappy. I felt betrayed by my parents. It was the first time that I had really been

away from home. I couldn't believe that my parents had sent me away. Everything felt totally alien and quite hostile. It felt quite brutal when compared to where I came from. The first period of time when I was there it was a feeling of absolute alienation and shock. I suspect my experience was akin to that of somebody going to borstal for the first time.

#### *Daily routine*

36. You got up at about seven o'clock in the morning, got dressed, went for breakfast then went to lessons. You would have a break after the first set of lessons in the morning. There were then more lessons before lunch. In the afternoon there was games. I think there was then a bit of free time. After that it was prep. You then had supper. Lights out was usually at something like eight or nine o'clock.
37. I can't really remember Saturdays. I think there were games in the morning. I think there was free time in the afternoon. Sunday mornings consisted of a Sunday service in the hall within the grounds. There was then free time in the afternoon. I think there was also an evening service.

#### *Sleeping arrangements*

38. The dormitories held between sixteen and eighteen boys. You basically just had a bed. There could have been a little cabinet but I am not sure. I can't remember where you kept your clothes. There must have been a locker somewhere. You went to bed at about eight or nine o'clock. There was an official "lights out" time.

#### *Mealtimes / Food*

39. My mother was an excellent cook so I wasn't used to what we had in Merchiston. The food was absolutely appalling. It was revolting. It was badly cooked and usually served cold. Breakfast was porridge. For lunch there was a lot of fried fish that was served cold. I remember lots of grisly thick stews. Supper usually consisted of hot chocolate and sometimes a current bun. We used to have a lesser meal on

Sundays because there was less staff availability. It was always repetitive cheap food. I think I mostly survived on bread and jam.

40. If you didn't like something at mealtimes you gave it to someone else. You got punished for most things but I don't think that they punished you if you didn't eat your food.

#### *Washing / Bathing*

41. You washed at communal sinks in the mornings. It was all pretty hurried because you had to get to breakfast. I can't remember much about having baths. It didn't seem to happen very often. It was maybe once a week. In Chalmers West there was a bathroom to the rear of the building. It was adjacent to the housekeeper's quarters. There were eight or so baths in the bathroom.

#### *Clothing / Uniform*

42. I think the uniform was part of the culture shock. You wore baggy blue shorts. Shorts weren't particularly things that teenagers wore at that time. You also wore a shirt, a blue blazer, socks and shoes. You wore a kilt for Sunday service. In later years you could wear a grey long trousered suit to go out in. I think you could start wearing that when you were fifteen.
43. I remember having to have a haircut when I arrived at Merchiston. My hair had to be cut to regulation length. That was also part of the culture shock. Those were the early days of The Beatles and The Rolling Stones and everybody had long hair.

#### *Chores*

44. Apart from cleaning your shoes there wasn't really anything in terms of chores to do around the school. There were domestic staff who maintained the houses



*Pocket money*

45. I can vaguely remember some convoluted system for pocket money which was run by Mrs Anderson. I think it was quite regimented. I think you got 2s 6d a week. I think postal orders came in and they were cashed before the money was given to you.

*School*

46. The classes were smaller than I had been used to. There were about sixteen pupils in each class. By and large the teaching appeared to outsiders to be reasonable and predominantly English grammar school in style. Inside, the reality was that it was pretty mixed and pretty cruddy. I remember that art was good. Maths was dreadful. I was used to a more progressive way of teaching maths not the more traditional system taught at Merchiston. As far as I was concerned the teacher teaching maths could have been speaking Swahili.
47. I suppose if you embraced the school, schooling and the lifestyle and wanted to do something like go into the army then you could see it as adequate. However, if you hated the institution with a gusto, and the institution hated you, then the standard wasn't that great.

*Prep*

48. Prep is basically homework. You did it for two hours each night. You sat in a room supervised by a prefect. Prep was extremely tedious and repetitive. I remember going out of my head with boredom.

*Leisure time*

49. Rugby was incredibly important to the school. It was part of its identity. Rugby games were the highlight of the social calendar. Football was frowned upon. That was an added bone of contention for me at that time. I was very good at football and



was on the cusp of schoolboy recognition. Not being able to play football in games was a big thing for me. You moved to cricket in the summer. I loathed cricket just as much as rugby. There might have been a bit of athletics.

50. On Saturdays, if you didn't have a rugby game to watch, you could have some free time. Sunday afternoon was when you had more free time. Some people used to listen to the radio. I can remember latterly going out cycling for a couple of hours on a Sunday.

### *Colours*

51. There was a colours system. I think you could get a certain colour depending on the sport you played. I didn't aspire to any of that.

### *Dorm captains, vice dorm captains and prefects*

52. Dorm captains and vice captains were boys who were well thought of by the hierarchy. They had responsibility for making sure people behaved after lights out. They also had other duties. They got certain privileges as part of their role. I can't think of any examples but the privileges were all fairly minor in character. I suspect they felt fairly significant at the time. The two stock phrases that were used, specifically by the dorm captains and vice captains, back then were "get a grip" and "spastic". Those were the accepted words of abuse. My dorm captain was a guy called [REDACTED]. I can't really remember him but I know I didn't particularly like him. The vice dorm captain was a guy called [REDACTED].
53. Being a dorm captain or vice dorm captain was really an apprenticeship for becoming a prefect. Boys were sort of groomed to become prefects in those roles. I think it helped if you were also good at games. It also helped being academically bright. However, I don't think that was the main consideration. Everything was based on privilege. If you were a prefect then you could do things like walk on the grass. You could also punish other fellow pupils.

*Religious instruction*

54. There were no prayers or anything like that before bedtime. I can't remember saying grace before mealtimes. You had to attend a Sunday service in the morning and the evening. That was undertaken in the main hall inside the school.

*Trips / Holidays / Leave*

55. I don't really remember any trips or anything like that. Our holidays were a bit longer. You got three weeks holiday at Christmas. It was slightly longer than the state sector at Summer time. I went home during the holidays. You got three leaves a term. Your parents would come up and pick you up at Saturday lunchtime. You didn't have to come back until the Sunday night.
56. Many people had aunts or relatives in Edinburgh. They would get taken out by these aunts on Sundays. A lot of us ended up gaming the system when we reached the age of about fourteen or fifteen. It was very easy to get out on Sundays if you wanted to. We would get someone to write a letter professing to be a relative and send it to the housemaster. We would end up going out in Edinburgh and do our own thing.

*Birthdays and Christmas*

57. I was home during my birthdays and at Christmas time.

*Visits*

58. You got visitors every six weeks or so. It was usually my parents. There was never any obstruction from the school in terms of that. We would go out and have a meal at a hotel. If luck was on your side you would go out and see either Hearts or Hibs. If you were allowed to stay over there could be three or four families from Stranraer in the one hotel at the same time.

*Reports / Inspections*

59. You got end of term reports. It was very much like the school system now. All your individual teachers for each subject would write an entry in your report. I've still got them all. My reports were all pretty dire.
60. Mervyn Preston was the only person who really spoke directly with your parents. He was the face of the school. I can vaguely remember being at meetings where he was speaking with my parents. I don't think there were all that many meetings. He would come out with all these insights and platitudes. Your role was just to sit and listen. My father was quite naïve and lapped up all this sort of thing. I think that was to do with class. Mervyn Preston hit all the right notes which meant my father was fairly deferential to what he was saying.
61. There weren't any outsiders coming in to undertake inspections of the school. If there was any of that then I certainly didn't see it.

*Healthcare*

62. I can't remember a visiting doctor. There must have been one. There was an arrangement with a dentists in Edinburgh. I remember them taking people down to a specific dentist.
63. There was a sanatorium some way away from the school itself by the school gates. I recall the matron spent most of her time keeping her eye on the domestic staff. That probably increasingly took more and more of her time than anything of a nursing nature. I think that might have been why there was a part time nurse who worked in the sanatorium. My memory of all of that is very vague.
64. I can remember matron checking out the welts after we were hit by the cane or a tawse. Matron would have been aware of us being caned or beaten as punishment. I don't think that the nurse got involved with that sort of thing.

*Letters / Telephone*

65. You could make telephone calls and write letters. Doing that wasn't a formal part of the week. All the letters went through the school secretary, Mrs Anderson. The phone was kept in her office. She would listen into your phone calls.
66. Mrs Anderson steamed your letters open. I don't think she steamed open every letter. The pure number of letters would have prevented her from doing that. I am sure that if she had been instructed to do so she would have applied it. In later years I made sure I gave my letters to Mrs Anderson's assistant, Mary. I made sure she posted my letters instead.

*Running away and escaping at night*

67. I think there was the odd occasion where people ran away. A lot of the children in the school had parents who lived abroad so there was very little point in doing that. There was less running away than you would have thought. I never attempted to get home. My parents would have just sent me back if I tried.
68. In later years we used to escape at night. There was a guy call [REDACTED] who was extremely good at sneaking out. I became his accessory. We used to get out in the middle of the night and escape. We'd wander about Edinburgh in the early hours of the morning before returning. We did that on numerous occasions. We did that for thrills. It was also usually because of cigarettes, booze and girls. We had built up a relationship with the domestic staff. Some of the domestic staff had their own flats in Edinburgh. It was all "short pants romances".

*Bed-wetting*

69. I think there were bits and pieces of bed-wetting. I am not aware of there being any punishment for bed-wetting. The housekeeper would deal with it in the mornings.

*Discipline and punishment*

70. Discipline in the school was fairly brutal. You got punished for most things. They were quite good at sanctions. It was all based on the concept of privilege. If you weren't part of the clique of boys who got on with the school's establishment you were deemed to be a threat to the status quo. I think not wanting to be a part of the status quo was really just a response to the culture shock. That was the case with me. Because of that they made it as unpleasant as possible for me to be there.
71. There was no induction or explanation as to what the "dos and don'ts" were when you arrived. You very much had to pick all of that up as you went along. It was all "if you are caught you could get x, y or z". There was nothing written down but there was an acknowledgement that there was a pecking order and that certain things were the way they were. These things could change rapidly. I suppose that the pupils who were from the prep schools were already of that mind-set and may have been used to those "dos and don'ts". If you were from state school then perhaps you were not so used to it all.
72. In school there was the belt. There was also the cane. Smoking was the obvious thing you could get punished for with the belt or cane. Vandalism would be another thing. The use of the belt or the cane tended to be fairly arbitrary. I do remember being belted as well as hearing of others being belted. You could get beaten for most things. I don't think a prefect would beat you purely for something like walking on the grass. However, they could argue that it was part of an accumulation of things. If that was the case then there wasn't much that you could do about it.
73. There was nothing in terms of parental visits being taken away as a punishment if you had done something wrong. That wasn't one of the sanctions that they used. I think that was too dangerous for the school. Parents paid money for you to be there. I think stopping parental visits would have been tantamount to the school admitting that there was something amiss.

**Relationships between pupils**

74. [REDACTED] and I were together in the same dorm. We both, very early on, started to become aware of homosexuality in the dorm. Back then homosexuality was an anathema to people our age and background. Homosexual activity was viewed as beyond the pale. It was different times back then.
75. [REDACTED] and I became aware of boys jumping into bed with one another in a different corner of the dorm. They would generally play around and masturbate each other off. I remember half-hearted attempts by the dorm captain to stop it. You got the impression that this was the accepted norm. [REDACTED] and I were deeply shocked by all of this. We had never experienced or seen people doing this sort of thing before. I remember being quite shocked that one of the boys engaged in homosexual activity was quite a hard boy. I had always been under the assumption that gay people were feminine.
76. I think all of that sort of behaviour was more prominent during the earlier times I was at Merchiston. It was all when the boys were in their early adolescence. I think a lot of what we thought of as homosexual behaviour was just puppy love. You didn't have the opportunity of mixing with the opposite sex. To me it was just experimenting. I don't view it now as those individuals necessarily being gay at that time. I guess a lot of people grew out of it. In today's parlance I guess that a lot of those people "re-defined their sexuality".
77. The sort of activity I am describing didn't involve any staff or teachers. However, Preston and Rainey Brown would come in and joke and jape in the dorms before lights out. I remember them spending most of their time with boys who were engaging with that type of thing and very little time with people like me. The boys engaged with homosexual activity were the people that Preston tended to give a bit of slack to. In hindsight, I do think that sexual naivety put people at risk of being exploited.

## Abuse at Merchiston Castle School

### *Bullying*

78. There were quite a lot of boys who had moved from prep schools where they had already got to know each other. Fortunately [REDACTED] was there. I hadn't known him from before but we hung together. [REDACTED] and I had fairly thick Galloway accents. We were initially bullied by a gang of four or five boys from one prep school. They would pick on us and make fun of our accents. I remember them professing not to understand a word of what we were saying. It was all pretty snobbish stuff like "you can't play rugby" and things like that. We were also smokers and this was viewed as a pretty heinous crime. Because of that we were viewed as the opposition. People were extremely unpleasant to you.
79. You had to learn how to survive. It was like the book "Lord of the Flies." We had come from a small Scottish town so the ability to physically look after ourselves was fairly ingrained. I guess when the other boys professed to not understand us our response was "well perhaps you'll understand this." You would end up smacking the bully in the face. The next time they knew to keep well away. That's how it operated. If you didn't do that you would go under.
80. The bullying never really stopped. It just became more sophisticated and subtle. There was institutionalised bullying. The biggest bullies of them all were the prefects. They had the privilege of being able to beat you officially. It was all for fairly arbitrary stuff. Being caught smoking was the obvious example.
81. There was a boy called [REDACTED]. He was a very attractive rather effeminate boy who was from South America. He was very highly strung. The boys had heard that he had come from a broken home and that alcohol was involved. He was a boy that appeared to provoke attacks. It seemed that he always wanted to be smacked. He almost always got it. It was almost as if he wanted it. On reflection I think he was a bit sadomasochistic. I believe Preston had known [REDACTED] father. He was a favourite of Preston.



82. On one occasion a couple of my friends smacked [REDACTED] about a bit. I believe he was asking for it. Within forty eight hours Rainy Brown had decided that my physics homework deserved a good thrashing. It all just came out of the blue. I didn't understand where he was coming from because my physics homework had been constantly lamentable since I started at the school. That had been almost the norm for me. This was a case of enforcement. It all seemed fairly spurious.

*Abuse by staff – Mervyn Preston and James Rainy Brown*

83. During my fourth or fifth week in the school we were in prep. Prep had been deadly boring for quite some time. We were all over sexed little boys who were bored out of our skulls. There was a particularly dirty minded little boy called [REDACTED]. He would do dirty skits and rhymes. It was all schoolboy sort of stuff. This all led to people doing doodles on their arms. [REDACTED] drew a pair of boobs on his knee. Not to be out done I pulled my penis out and drew a smiley face on it. That was then the end of the matter. It was all very childish.
84. Word got around and I was collared by Preston a few days later. I was called in to see him in his room. There was this overwhelmingly almost catholic thing of "you have committed a great sin my son. You have committed such a great sin that I can barely talk about it." It was all about gravity and guilt. Looking back part of me should have been quicker on the uptake. Preston was perfectly relaxed about all these people wanking each other off on a daily basis but I was wrong about this. I just felt bemused. Preston then went from guilt to "and how are you?" and "you know you can confide in me?" For some reason this struck a chord with me. I was desperately unhappy. I was thirteen and lonely. I guess I wanted some reassurance. The next thing I knew Preston had his arm around me and was trying to kiss me. I can remember his fleshy badly shaven face. I can remember the smell of whisky coming off of his breath. Those memories are very vivid to me. His hands were all over me. I was wearing shorts. It totally freaked me out. I must have recoiled or reacted because he sort of pulled away.

85. Preston then suddenly started giving platitudes. He was saying things like “you can trust me” and “we can see this through.” He inferred he was something akin to a parental figure in Merchiston. All the time throughout that there was incessant physical contact. I think he had realised that he had got as far as he could get with me and decided on that occasion to drop it. I can remember him saying things like “this is our secret. I am here. I know you are unhappy. You can come and see me any time.” It was all that kind of stuff.
86. I remember going back to see Preston on a further one or two occasions. It was all after prep. On one of the occasions there was a current cake there. Current cake was a particular favourite of Preston’s. He offered me a piece. He gave me the cake then said “I am just going to have a bath now. Let’s finish the conversation in the bathroom.” He then had a conversation with me in the bathroom whilst he was in the bath completely naked. He asked me to pass the soap and all the rest of it. As I passed the soap he jammed his hand against mine. I recoiled, I backed away. The incident was fairly minor but it still occurred. I think by that stage the shock had worn off and the weariness had started settling in.
87. The galling thing for me, and the thing that really hurt, was that whilst he was professing to understand me and be my mentor he was warning all of my associates not to frequent with me. I found that out because my friends told me. This all seemed to escalate after I spurned his advances. I was a very vulnerable thirteen year old. There was a betrayal of trust. He had both gained my trust and, quite unashamedly, betrayed it almost in the same breath.
88. Pennies started dropping. Although, at first it was a very new environment, and we were all naïve and confused, we grew to understand what was going on. I became incredibly aware of Preston. I became aware that I was not alone in what I had been experiencing. I discovered that there were three other boys who had all gone through the same technique. The bathroom routine seemed to be Preston’s favourite. That happened to at least another three other boys.

89. As the rugby season went on we got more and more muddy. Accordingly we spent more time in the showers. Preston and Rainy Brown would be in the showers with us on a daily basis duly chatting to the boys. They spoke particularly with the boys who were the ones jumping in and out of each other's beds. They were mainly all from the one prep school. Preston would quite unashamedly grope their buttocks and flick them with a towel. Most of my friends would recoil with horror if Preston did these things to them. However, these particular boys appeared to be rather taken with it. This would go on for some time almost on a daily basis.
90. Another thing that Preston liked to do was nip you. It was mainly on your leg. He would put his hand up your shorts to do that. He tried to get you as far up your thigh as he possibly could. He would do this publicly. He'd do it for minor chastisements.
91. Preston's behaviour happened throughout the entire time I was in the school. Preston couldn't have done what he was doing in isolation. A lot of the structures that had been created allowed him to identify boys who might be malleable to what he wanted to do. Preston's behaviour became quite normalised. It was all institutionalised. It became "it's just Preston being a jolly."
92. The touching and the feeling didn't actively involve Rainy Brown. I saw far less evidence of Rainy Brown engaging in that sort of behaviour. He was, however, very much aware of what Preston was doing. He was an accessory. Rainy Brown was Preston's enforcer. He was part of his fifth column. If there was any beating to be done he did that with great gusto, particularly if I was involved. If there was any hard discipline then he was the man.
93. The more insidious bit was Preston's grooming of vulnerable people. He gravitated towards them. He would do it all under the guise of being the father of the house. I recall that [REDACTED] spent a lot of time in the sanatorium. He would be assiduously visited by Preston. All of this could be construed as innocent. I can remember once being in the sanatorium. I can't remember why that was. I think I had been sent there by matron. If I'm honest I can't remember having to stay there overnight. I was in there with two other boys. Preston came to visit. He gave me one look and

said "well get him out of here." I was then dispatched. At the time I didn't think it was significant but looking back I wonder whether it was. If you want to abuse people you need opportunity. I don't think the sanatorium was supervised and that was a place Preston could go.

94. Another potential avenue for abuse for Preston was Sunday afternoons. Preston always went out of the school on Sunday afternoons. He used to make a big thing about how he had a room in the Caledonian Hotel. On one occasion, one of the maids reported to me that one of the new maids had seen Preston with what she first thought was a blonde girl. I can't remember where it was but it was some distance away from the Caledonian Hotel. She later identified him as [REDACTED] I think the new maid had been mistaken because on Sundays you had to wear a kilt for Sunday service. In terms of hard evidence there is nothing to suggest that Preston had taken [REDACTED] out for anything other than lunch. That would have been acceptable. However, in hindsight it might have been something else.
95. Another thing we noticed was that, as opposed to us, the boys who engaged in homosexual activity would find it very easy to get out on Sundays. I suppose in the cold light of day all of this is circumstantial. However, from my experience of Preston he was a full blooded paedophile. He wasn't just fiddling about with boys. In my opinion, he was doing this on a fairly industrial scale.

*Abuse by staff – CDR [REDACTED]*

96. There was one boy who was desperately immature and desperate to become one of us.. The boy reported to us that there was inappropriate behaviour on CDR [REDACTED] part. He reported hands on knees whilst he was wearing a kilt, touching and asking how puberty was coming on. He said that CDR [REDACTED] had suggested to him that maybe a physical examination should be done to see how things were coming on.

*Abuse by staff – Mr [CDS]*

97. I recall that our counterparts who were two years above us loathed a housemaster by the name of [CDS]. I remember that there was a real intensity of feeling towards him by the people in that year. There was a hatred there. People didn't use the term paedophile in those days but that was essentially how he was described. I remember hearing that on the last day of term in 1968 the pupils in that house smashed [CDS] room up, smashed his red sports car up and tried to smash [CDS] up himself. I don't know how many boys were involved. [CDS] ended up running for safety. I heard that the reason that those boys did that to [CDS] was because he was engaged in such serious paedophilic behaviour that the pupils just wanted to get him. Apparently, the police were never called even though it was all serious GBH sort of stuff.

#### **Reporting of abuse at Merchiston Castle School**

98. The root of the problem with reporting was that if you had any problems you had to go through your housemaster. That was always the assumption. There was no one outwith the house you could speak to or open up to. [CDR] did develop a "pastoral role" for himself. However, there wasn't any guidance that he was the person to speak to if you had any issues. You just wouldn't speak to the staff about what was going on.
99. I did speak to my parents. I didn't really understand the term paedophile at that time. The term I probably used was "dirty old man." My parents just saw in Mervyn Preston a quintessential English gentleman. Nothing happened as a result of speaking with my parents.
100. I can remember a boy called [redacted] and I talking about writing to either the Daily Record or the Sunday Post. That would have been in about 1968. I am certain it related to inappropriate behaviour at the school. I thought it was a really good idea to expose what was going on. [redacted] was far less enthusiastic. I can



remember putting something in writing but I cannot recall what specific incident it referred to. We went to post the letter. We later discovered from Mary that Mrs Anderson had intercepted the letter. I have no idea what happened to the letter. In hindsight, I think I should have probably persevered with speaking to the press.

101. I am not aware of any reports being made to the police at all. I think the police were very much viewed as working class back then. You just didn't do that. There was a deference there.

### **Leaving Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh**

102. I think, before I left, things started to escalate at Merchiston. About that time Preston's term as the acting headmaster was coming to an end. CDS [REDACTED] had had his room and car trashed. A friend of ours called [REDACTED] had brought some dope back. He caught some sort of bug and ended up having to have a blood test. Cannabis showed up in his blood result. There was shock and horror and he was never seen again. That sort of thing was viewed as above the usual misdemeanours in the school. Me and another guy got caught by the police on our way from going to see two of the domestic staff who had a flat in Edinburgh. I was totally unrepentant. They were funny times. A lot was going on.
103. I think, by that time, my defiance and opposition was obvious to Preston. I was part of a group of boys who had started to rebel. I desperately wanted to leave. Increasingly people like me were disenchanted with the place. I suppose they thought that if they cut out the bad wood then they might be able to get the place on an even keel again.
104. It may have been all these factors that contributed to me leaving. However, it also may have just been that my father's benefactor, if his boss was the benefactor, had run out of money. The business was in trouble at that time. It was also probably obvious to my father by that time that it wasn't a good investment keeping me in the school. It just all stopped one day in 1968 when my parents came to pick me up.

### **Life after Merchiston Castle School**

105. I tried to get into the local high school in Stranraer. That didn't happen which was a pity. My father then sent me to a pre-apprentice college in Ayr which was a disaster. In 1969 I ended up, almost by default, in Carlisle Technical College. I stayed in Carlisle until 1971. I made lots of good friends and had a whale of a time. However, I didn't do much academically.
106. I came back to Stranraer with my tail between my legs after not achieving very much. I then worked on a farm for about a year. That encouraged me to go to Glasgow to get a couple of highers. I started to think about social work. I was then accepted by the Home Office for a social work role and Manchester Polytechnic for a place learning about youth and community work. I chose the Manchester option. I ended up working in the voluntary sector before working in social services. Within social services I moved into crime and disorder before going into regeneration. I was then seconded out to become head of the [REDACTED] in Manchester. I then became the chief executive of a [REDACTED] charity. I ran that for ten years before retiring.

### **Impact**

107. Merchiston was a complete waste of an education. I left there very bitter. I certainly felt very alienated. I ended up with only two O Levels. That was the sum product of my time. I don't think my experience was unique. In terms of academic standards it was probably worse than the standards at a local high school.
108. My experiences left me with a massive chip on my shoulder. I was left with a deep suspicion of adults. It left me with a certain contempt for authority. Merchiston gave me a deep and angry dislike of authority and the status quo. It made me in my youth very left wing and alternative. I made a vow that all of my offspring would go to state



school and that is what has happened. I made sure I was a school governor at all the schools my kids went to.

109. For me it isn't the being "fiddled about with" that has affected me. Lots of people get fiddled about with without being traumatised. That's not really the significant thing for me. It's the psychological and emotional betrayal that runs far deeper. It was the betrayal of faith in a vulnerable child that has got to me.

### **Records**

110. I have never made any attempts to obtain my records from Merchiston. I don't know why you would want to do that? I'm not sure they would still be there in any case. I think that Merchiston just took the money and cashed it. I don't think there was much paperwork involved.
111. I have some letters from the time I was in Merchiston. I also still have all of my own reports. I dug them out to jog my memory about certain things. They may provide some corroboration for the things that I have talked about in this statement. There is evidence in them of my relationships with certain people at the school and certain incidents concerning people at the school. They provide an insight into how I was thinking back then.

### **Lessons to be Learned**

112. I became aware of the Inquiry through the media. I reflected back on my days at Merchiston and thought that my experiences there, and the behaviour of one person in particular, was relevant to what the Inquiry was doing. I had previously dismissed what had occurred. I had assumed that it was par for the course for those days. However, the more I thought about it the more I thought "actually people need to be held to account."

113. I am sure there are far stronger and harrowing stories of abuse than mine. I don't know whether the things I experienced places Preston in the realms of Jimmy Saville territory. I think in comparison to that it was fairly minor. However, I do think Preston manipulated his power. You instinctively knew that he did what he did as a living and on a daily basis. I suspect there will be hundreds of others he has also manipulated. I suspect that one of the issues is how much of that died with him.
114. People in authority are sometimes deemed beyond reproach. I think we sometimes let people off the hook because of their status and reputation. Irrespective of status everybody should undergo the same degree of scrutiny as anybody else. It seems sometimes very easy for people in authority to get away with things. If abuse is still going on then it will be going on through the people who are still in power. Preston couldn't have got away with what he did without having power and authority. If there is an examination of power and privilege in this Inquiry, especially amongst the great and the good, then I believe that will be all to the good. You should never ever take things at face value.
115. 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..... 25.10.18 .....