

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

ZLE

Support person present: No

1. My name is ZLE. My date of birth is 1975. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I was born in Munster, Germany. Both my parents are Scottish. My father was in the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders. My mum, was a civil servant and she worked in the camp wherever my dad was based. We moved around every two years. They said that was the reason I went to boarding school because it was disruptive to my education.
3. I attended Queen Victoria School, QVS, in Dunblane. I went just before my tenth birthday until I was sixteen. Before this I was at a primary school in and in Edinburgh, near Bonnyrigg. My dad was based in Penicuik and I went to school there for a couple of years. That was the last place, so from there I went to QVS. My dad was posted to Colchester very shortly thereafter.
4. I have one brother called He came to QVS for a bit. He started off at a different boarding school in England. I think it was called the Duke of York school in Kent. He was there for a few years and then he got himself expelled so that he could come to QVS with me. He was there for a year or so before he left. He is just under three years older than me. He was there around 1990 for about a year. He would be sixteen to seventeen years old.

5. My dad moving around a lot was the reason we went to boarding school but I never understood why my brother and I went to separate schools. To this day I don't understand. QVS was, at the time, a school for the sons of Scottish servicemen and he was my brother so I don't know why he didn't count.
6. I remember being pretty terrified and I was really upset because I didn't want to go. I was very resistant. In army life, with army families, you go around in groups and build up friendships. I was devastated to be told I was going to boarding school and my friends weren't. I just did not want to be there and I was pretty scared. I didn't know what to expect. It was very new to me. I had an entrance exam. It was for a few hours one day. I went to the exam, had a little bit of a look around and then we left. I was only nine. I was so far removed from what was going on. I was only there to do this test. At that time I wasn't even sure I was aware what was going on.

#### **Queen Victoria School, Perth Road, Dunblane**

7. QVS was a Ministry of Defence sponsored school. They didn't run it, it was run by civilian teachers. There was one post, SNR [REDACTED] that tended to be occupied by a former military leader, [REDACTED] or something like that. I don't know what role he had in the direct running of the school, I think it was maybe more of a liaison between the military and the school. The role changed hands while I was there, but when I started it was CDP [REDACTED]. He had a property on the school premises. He and his wife lived there, they were a lovely couple. I can't remember who replaced him but he wasn't quite as welcoming and friendly.
8. I think there were about six hundred pupils at the school. There were only boys when I was there. A couple of years after I left it changed and became mixed. It was from nine to eighteen year olds.
9. I was in the junior house called Wavell, which was in a separate building. The other houses, Cunningham, Trenchard and Haig, were in the main building. It was a massive building with many floors on many levels. On the ground floor was the main entrance and the porters lodge. As you walked in the doors and to the right hand

side was the lodge itself. It was a reception or security type thing. To the left side was the colour room where the school flags were kept. You went through another set of doors and you were in the main hall. If you carried on walking in a straight line you came to the dining hall and kitchen. If you didn't go quite that far and turned left or right there were stairs to Cunningham on the right and Trenchard on the left. There was another set of stairs for Haig House, this was all on one level. The others were on a couple of levels.

10. As you come in the main entrance and turned left down a corridor there was a little room with a phone. You could book a twenty minute slot to call home. Further down there was another room, which was a sixth form common room. It was basically for Haig, not the sixth form, really all of Haig House. Somewhere down there was an exit to get out the back to the playing fields, which was a vast area. Down the hill from there was an indoor sports hall. We were in there occasionally but we did mainly outdoor sports. There were football pitches, rugby pitches and some athletics. At the back of the hall were woods and a stream running through it that we played in, where we built dams and things.
11. The school was close to the main road. Most of the land was behind the main building. The Wavell building was at the side of this. There were no classrooms in the main building, you only stayed there. There was a parade ground out the front and a chapel on the right, round the back. We were in there every day except Saturday. If you keep walking round the back there was the hospital.
12. The same headmaster was there the entire time I was there. He was a small man who smoked a lot. We called him 'The Pod', but I can't recall his name. He wasn't actively involved in our day to day life. We saw him but he wasn't involved. Mr Paterson was the deputy headmaster. He was much more present. He was a giant of a man. I remember him most as always being there when I was being punished. I had a lot of respect for him. The housemasters would be below him. They changed around a bit.

13. My housemasters were **OLB** in Wavell House. He was there the entire time I was there. I can't remember the housemaster in Trenchard. He was a tall guy and had an American pitbull type dog, which had an anvil like face. He had a relaxed attitude. He let the kids get away with a lot more. He was quite chilled. I went to Cunningham House after Wavell and Mr **QTQ** was the housemaster for a while. He was a Welsh man. I remember he had a deputy called Mr Robertson who was the music teacher. He was a very big man and he had a presence. I'm not sure who took over from Mr **QTQ** as it was near the end of my time in Cunningham. Mr Philips was the housemaster of Haig. I think Mr Laing deputised for him. That's the structure as I remember it.
  
14. Below the housemasters were all the other teachers who were all civilian. There was Mr Shannon, who was formerly in the navy. Another one, Mr Borking, the maths teacher, had also been in the navy. They all spent part of the time on the pastoral side of things. Mr Laing was the teacher for craft and design or technical drawing. Mr **QTQ** was the  teacher and was involved in the cadet forces. Mr Silcox was the padre. I think he was formerly in the military, a former army chaplain. He had a decommissioned uzi gun in his house. He was also a religious education teacher. There were two nursing staff who worked in the hospital, the matron, Mrs Walton, and a nurse. I can't remember her name. They ran the medical centre side of things. There was also the sports side of things, which included the pipe band, highland dancing and the cadet forces.
  
15. The prefects had a role in discipline. Their powers extended to being able to give you what we called 'days'. This was where we would turn up at the sports hall round about seven in the morning and have to run laps of the playing fields. They could say you had however many days of doing that. I think that was the extent of it. There were monitors above the prefects. Their role was general discipline, really overseeing the prefects. There was a senior monitor as well. I think a lot of their role translated into military kind of things, when we were doing parades and things like that.

## Routine at Queen Victoria School, Perth Road, Dunblane

### *First day*

16. My parents dropped me off on my first day. I started in the very lowest year, primary six. We were rookies and someone was chosen from primary seven to help us and show us the ropes a little bit. I can't remember who took us to the store, but we went there and got our uniform and a huge amount of kit. We were shown our dorm, given our locker, given our bed and basically handed over to the school.
17. I was in Wavell House, which is the lowest, junior house for primary six and seven boys. Cunningham and Trenchard Houses are the two middle houses for first, second and third years then Haig House was more senior for the fourth, fifth and sixth years. We were shown around. Everyone in primary six started the same day. I can't remember the details, but I do remember that we were shown around.
18. Wavell House was quite a small building, you just lived there. It was on two floors. On the ground floor was the cubby hole area. Each cubby hole was labelled up with your school number and that's where you put your dirty laundry and picked up your clean stuff. On the next floor up was the dorms. I can't remember if there was another floor above it. From the dorms, next door, was the Wavell classrooms, so it was all kind of contained. The only reason you would need to leave Wavell House was for the dining hall, the school hospital and the chapel. The dining hall was in the main building and the hospital was behind it. The other houses were in the main building.
19. I can't remember meeting the housemaster on the first day. His name was OLB OLB I remember being scared of him all the time but only because he was a scary adult, not for any particular reason. I met the matron. She told us about the laundry process. We had a couple of teachers, Mr QYL and Mr Beattie but I can't remember meeting them on the first day. I think OLB was there and the matron was definitely there.

20. The boy who showed us around was the son of an Argyle. I vaguely knew him, but because he was older I was never in his social group, but I knew of him. That's why he was picked for me to show me around. It was then settling into your dorm and getting to know a few of the other new people.
21. I always thought of Mr **QYL** as the assistant because he was the elder of the teachers, but I don't know if that was a formal title. Mr **OLB** lived in a flat that was joined to the house with his wife. I know there were other quarters on the school premises where some teachers stayed. I don't know if Mr **QYL** or Mr Beattie lived on site. I don't think Mr Beattie stayed because he had a Toyota MRII and we saw him driving that in and out. It looked quite a flash car at the time.

### *Mornings*

22. I remember getting up reasonably early. There was reveille. Someone in the pipe band had a bugle and he would walk round, outside the buildings, waking everyone up with reveille.
23. You would get up, get washed, dressed and go to breakfast. It was staggered as it was too small a dining hall to seat six hundred people. You had your own place to sit. You would then go to chapel about eight thirty for about twenty minutes and classes started at nine o'clock. You had classes all through the day. It was a longer day. I remember talking to civilian friends and it was a longer day than they had. We finished after four, about four twenty-five. Lunch was staggered too. I remember queueing up in the hall to go into the cookhouse to get your food, then go and sit down.
24. After classes it would be dinner time, which was staggered again, then a bit of free time, during which you weren't allowed out of the school grounds. We would then have prep for about an hour, which was in your classroom, when you would do your homework. Prep was about an hour and a half in Trenchard and Cunningham, which you would do at seven o'clock. When you were in Haig it was up to you. We went to

supper after prep, which was back in the dining room, where we had milk and biscuits. We then went back to our house. That was the average day.

25. Saturdays and Sundays were a bit different. Saturday morning was split between class and sports fields. Usually it was rugby until lunch time. Saturday afternoon was yours. You were allowed out of the school grounds but here were limits to how far you could go. When you were in Wavell you could go to what we called the first shop, which was the closest shop to the school. We had to go in our walking out dress, which was kilt, shirt, tie and jacket, so that everyone knew who we were and who we represented. As you went up the school you could go farther and in casual clothing, into Dunblane, into Stirling, as far as you want to go in the time that you had. I don't remember ever going out alone but I don't know if that was mandated, but you would always go out with your friends. I can't remember when the distance was increased. I remember going into Dunblane in the walking out dress in Wavell years but I don't know exactly how long after that the distance was upped. One Saturday evening a month we would go to chapel in our walking out dress.
26. Sundays were largely free. Most Sundays we would go to chapel in our dress red tunic and kilt. One Sunday a month was a parade where we would march. Some parents came, sometimes some visitors would just come and watch because they knew that we did this. The rest of Sunday was your own.

### *Houses*

27. In Wavell we slept in dorms. There were maybe twenty people in bunk beds. There were lockers at one end. You had your own locker. The first year we were there, every morning you would make your bed up. It was sheets and blankets and you'd make them up into a bed block. In your second year, in primary seven, we could bring our own duvets.
28. I don't know how you were picked to go into Trenchard or Cunningham. I think you put your name down to where you wanted to go but you didn't always get your choice. I think there was at least an illusion of choice.

29. Cunningham and Trenchard were on the top floors of the main building. In Cunningham there were two sides to it. The building was like a 'U' shape. It was on one floor. First year on one side of the floor, second year on the other half and third year on all of the other side. You moved to different parts of the floor the older you got. It was the same in Trenchard. Haig was on the lower level, one above the ground floor.
30. In first year you were in bunk beds, in second and third years it was single beds. There was a small separation between first and second year, like a partition. But there was more freedom in second year. In third year you built up a bit more trust and there was a bit more flexibility. In fourth year they just had a refit of the living accommodation, there was a new structure. It was your own area, partitioned off with walls. There was a hole where a door would be, but no door. You had a bunk bed then underneath there was a study area.
31. In fifth year you had your own room. There was a temporary wall, not right up to the ceiling, which separated you from the others. Prefects and monitors had their own rooms with walls and doors. It was the same number of boys that moved with you from year to year. There was under a hundred in every year. You had a small locker in Wavell, this got bigger the older you got.
32. The monitors were separated from everyone else. The prefects were maybe just prefects because they were in that year. They weren't picked on merit, but the monitors were. I wasn't either a prefect or a monitor as I left in fifth year.

*Bedtime*

33. I can't recall what time lights went out in Wavell. A duty teacher would put the lights out and get you up in the morning. There would be reveille too, but you might still need a poke. It got less strict the older you got, there were still lights out but it wasn't as formal. The duty teachers were Mr Robertson and Mr QTQ . I can't remember



the ones in the middle years. In Haig house there was a lot more flexibility as long as you weren't disturbing anyone else.

### *Mealtimes / Food*

34. The food was like school dinners basically. It wasn't great but it wasn't slop. I think they tried but didn't always succeed. The kitchen staff were friendly. They would be the ones behind the counter. We never really met the people in the kitchen itself. The food was ok and there was a lot of it. They may have run out of the thing that you wanted but there was always a choice.
35. I remember Sunday mornings when I was in Haig and we could sit in the dining hall for about an hour and a half. It was leisurely and if there were left overs you could help yourself. Sunday morning breakfasts were big.
36. The school would encourage you to eat, but I don't remember anyone being disciplined for not eating. There was always something you could eat.

### *Washing / bathing*

37. When I was in Wavell it was communal showers and a red tiled floor. One side had a block of shower heads, five or six wide. You showered with everyone and every day, mostly in the evenings before bed. There was always a teacher that came in with the nature of boys and water and things you could block and fill up. There was always some of that going on. So there were teachers coming in to make sure we weren't doing that. It was always a male adult. On the other side was a long urinal. If you had wet clothes there was a mangle and you could wring the clothes out to dry a little and then hang them up. All your clothing had a label with your school number on it so that it was put in the correct cubby hole.
38. In Cunningham, Trenchard and Haig, there were separate, individual shower cubicles. There was freedom to go when you wanted but you tended to go after

sporting activity or the end of the day. There were baths if you wanted to have a bath but nobody had one as part of the daily routine.

### *Clothing / uniform*

39. On the days you were allowed to wear civvies it was whatever you brought to the school with you. Mostly you wore the school uniform from morning to bedtime. In Wavell House it was navy blue, cordorouy shorts, that stopped short of the knee, all year round. If you were cold you had a cordoruoy jacket you could wear. As you went up the years you could wear long green barrack dress trousers, unless you were a prefect and you wore tartan trousers.

### *School*

40. The schooling was good enough. There were separations in terms of ability. So if you were good enough you would be in the higher maths class, if you weren't you'd be in the lower class. Science was split into chemistry, biology and physics. The languages taught were French and German. There were some conflicts with the timetable, I wanted to do biology and German but they clashed.
41. There was a mixture of standard grades and 'O' grades as well as highers. I did reasonably well. There were some teachers good and some bad. There were some you could see didn't want to be there, it was just a job. The French teacher, Mr Buchanan told me I wasn't doing his class. There were sixth form studies for those who had done highers. I only knew one who did that in my time. He did biology. I said I would stay on to do sixth form studies biology but I was told I wasn't good enough.
42. At technical drawing, craft and design there was a lot of safety because we were using woodworking tools, lathes and all that stuff. It was well kitted out. The teacher did most of the dangerous things like using the band saws and circular saws. It was maybe a bit lax in terms of religious studies. That was the one that everyone thought was a bit of a jolly. You just sat and watched a video

*Leisure time*

43. The days were reasonably full, so there wasn't much leisure time during the week. In Wavell there was a room on the ground floor where there were books and board games, like chess. I can't remember if there was a table, like pool or table tennis. There might have been a TV there. I wasn't interested in TV at that point.
44. Outside there was an area near the chapel and we played marbles there. We spent a lot of time in the woods and stream. There was a clearing in the woods that we called the 'magic circle', where organised fights took place if a couple of boys had a beef with each other. They would organise a time to go to the 'magic circle' and everybody went to watch.
45. We had hobbies. There was a choice of things you could do in the evenings but not every evening. There was a cooking club that Mr OLB wife did. She took us to her flat and we would make fudge or biscuits for half an hour or so. I can't remember what other hobbies there were in Wavell. I can't remember the cut off, but I think it was mandatory to have a hobby.
46. In Cunningham and Trenchard you could have up to three hobbies that you would do on different nights. I remember the ones that I did. I did pottery, and CDP CDP showed you how to make flies for fly fishing and there was the baking club I mentioned in Wavell. I think the fly thing was in Wavell too. I don't remember hobbies in more senior years. I think our time was more taken up with study and homework and stuff.
47. Everyone played a sport in every year. Rugby was a big thing. Every year had a first, second and third team. There was football and some of my friends played that. There were competitions between other schools. If you showed an aptitude for track and field you were encouraged. I remember one kid was good at the hammer. There was tennis. I don't think it was part of the curriculum, maybe just at weekends. I did that for a little while.

48. I don't know what year this started but there was a thing where you could ask permission to go on an overnight hiking, camping thing. Groups of three or four would be allowed to do it. You would be dropped off somewhere in Callander for example and agree where you would be picked up the next day. This wouldn't be in Wavell, it started in Trenchard and Cunningham. Not first year, maybe third year. There was no check point, just drop off and pick up. You were given food, raw meat to cook, like sausages, bacon and stuff like that, and camping gear.

*Combined Cadet Forces, (CCF)*

49. Everyone had to be in the combined cadet forces, navy, air force or army cadets. Everyone wanted to be in the army but there wasn't enough room for them all. The navy cadets wasn't too disciplined. I did a bit of navy and a bit of air force. There were activities that you could do. I remember being somewhere on a camp and flying a bulldog. There were others with more experience at flying that flew more sophisticated aircraft. One student got a pair of flying gloves from one of the teachers.
50. Mr Shannon took over the navy CCF and we started doing more water sports. There was more sailing and learning to tie knots, so it became a bit more structured with more meaning behind it.
51. There's a certain amount of arrogance with the M.O.D. and it was combined cadet forces or nothing. Scouts and things like that were seen as something for children. The whole purpose of that school was to breed the next generation of military personnel.

*Trips / Holidays*

52. There was a ski trip organised every year and I did it once. There were extra costs, so if your parents stumped up the money you could go. Some people did it regularly. There was a canoeing trip I remember doing. We stayed out camping and canoed down rivers all over Scotland. I went to Germany once and stayed in Minden. It was

to do with the cadet forces. We were there for a few days. Nothing was ever longer than a week.

53. It always really puzzled me on school holidays that you had young kids who were given a travel warrant, an M.O.D. form, and whose parents lived abroad. They would sometimes travel to an airport and fly unaccompanied to Canada, Africa, Maldives and a number of other places. Shortly after I started the school my dad was transferred to Colchester and I went on a train from Dunblane to London, got the tube across London then a train to Colchester and back again when it was time to go back to school I was only nine or ten years old and I did the trip entirely unaccompanied. You would never do that today. I would never let my kids do that. I only once went on a train with my brother. That concerns me. I don't know if it still happens today.

#### *Work/pocket money*

54. The guys in the pipe band, particularly the pipers, had the chance to make a bit of extra cash. They would play at Murrayfield before the Scotland rugby matches. I know some would stay on and busk on the streets of Edinburgh to make a bit more money. Sometimes a couple of them piped in the haggis. In Wavell we swept and you generally had to keep things tidy, but we didn't have to do any cleaning.
55. I think you had a pocket money account that the housemaster would look after. You would pay for things at the tuck shop with that or spend it at the shops in the town. Parents could send in post and tuck boxes, things like that.

#### *Religious study*

56. We had to go to church every day except Saturday, which told me religion played a big part in the school but it wasn't rammed down your throat apart from that. We did go to church once a month on a Saturday evening too. Prayers were said before meals sometimes, like Christmas dinner, when you had every pupil there as well as the headmaster and his wife.

*Birthdays and Christmas*

57. The school didn't put a tree up. It wasn't given a lot of focus because you weren't going to be there, but it was acknowledged. There was a Christmas dinner and everybody was there. I went home for Christmas.
58. I was there during my birthday. One time, when I was in first year, the headmaster's wife was at her table and someone told her it was my birthday. She got the whole school to sing 'Happy Birthday'. It was crushingly embarrassing but in hindsight it was a really nice thing to do. That was the only time it was marked.

*Personal possessions*

59. You could keep some of your own stuff at the school. I had a Walkman, a Gameboy, C.D.'s and books. You couldn't keep a lot, there wasn't a great deal of storage space.

*Visits / Inspections/ Review of Detention*

60. An adult relative could come and get you and take you away from the school for a day or the weekend then bring you back on the Sunday. A couple of times you could take a friend if you wanted. A few of us did that for each other, just to get someone out of the school.
61. My parents visited once during term time. They took me out for the day when my nana died. There was a permission procedure, you couldn't just turn up on a whim unless there was extenuating circumstances, like my nana dying. The parent could organise the permission, or the pupil could organise taking a friend. If you wanted to take someone with you, you had to give prior notice. I was taken out by a friend to his house in Loanhead for his birthday. I took my friend [REDACTED] to my grandfather's house in Glasgow one weekend. It wasn't a regular thing. My uncle turned up one day and he took me out, which was nice.

62. In Wavell there was letter writing time. I can't remember if we folded it, put it in an envelope and sealed it. It wasn't enforced in later years. Letters we received were always unopened when they arrived. There was never any evidence of letters being opened.
63. When you were making a phone call the nature of the room made it that the person waiting to use the phone could maybe listen but I can't think of an adult listening in. I can't remember inspections.
64. There was an event called the Grand Day, which was always on a Friday in June. We built up to this day, it was a really big day. Parents came and dignitaries, Prince Philip came once, and other royals turned up at times. We would parade round, there would be a pipe band, a colour party, a highland dancing team. I remember I was in the highland dance team and I danced in front of Prince Philip. It was a big thing, you prepared for it all year. Every month there would be a parade on a Sunday to practice for the Grand Day. So there was all that military life bred into you at an early age.

#### *Healthcare*

65. There was a hospital wing in the school. I was admitted once for four days with the flu. They had some beds in there. You were never confined to your room. If you were confined it was in hospital. There was one kid whose leg was broken so he went to the Accident and Emergency and put in a plaster. He was there a couple of days then came back to school.
66. They would deal with minor ailments at the school, like a sprained ankle. Doctors came in occasionally and dentists came in. I had a few teeth taken out. There must have been eye tests but I can't remember specifically.

### *Running away*

67. I ran away once. I can't remember why, I just needed to get out. Another boy and I stuck on military fatigues, because we thought we wouldn't be seen, and walked out the school gates. We got to Stirling and walked back to the school. We didn't have a clue what we were doing. That was in Haig, in fourth year. We were missed and were spoken to by the housemaster, Ben Philips, at his living accommodation. It was me and a guy called [REDACTED]. We weren't disciplined. No-one ever ran away and stayed away but there were people who occasionally did what we did.

### *Bed Wetting*

68. I won't tell you his name but there was a boy in my year who had a bedwetting problem up until he was in third year. I don't think it continued when we went to Haig. I can't recall how the staff dealt with it. They would have had to change his sheets. He was relentlessly bullied about it. From the day he arrived until the day he left he was teased about it and laughed at every time he wet the bed. He never stopped wetting the bed. It was awful for him. We were never asked not to mock him or tease him.

### *Pastoral care*

69. I always had the sense that if you wanted to talk to someone you could but I didn't think there was anyone pro-actively telling us they were there for us to talk to. I can't recall anyone coming to me and asking if I was ok, or if I wanted to talk. When my parents took me out to tell me my nana died, no-one came to me and asked if I was ok, even though I was hiding in my locker in floods of tears. No-one ever checked up on me.
70. The guy with the bedwetting problem must have felt terribly isolated. It went on year after year and I don't recall any help given to him. Unless you were a star at sports or a star piper in the pipe band, or the hammer thrower, you were left to get on with it.



71. There was one year at the end of term, my parents were meant to pick me up but they had forgotten. It must have been in fourth year. So I spoke to Ben Philips and he checked with the police to make sure my parents were ok. They were and had just forgot, so he said I could stay the night at the school until they got me the next day. That was the extent of things.
72. They could definitely do better at the pastoral care side of things. Communication is easier now, video conferencing and skype, etc. Back then it was letter writing and a twenty minute phone call. You need more. Maybe building you up to be someone who is ready to go into the real world, to form you into an adult. To disperse you into the world isn't good enough.
73. You instinctively knew that if you needed to speak to someone you would go to the housemaster. The **SNR** **CDP** was someone who had the respect of every pupil. He would invite you into his home and have garden parties. I knew I could talk to him and his wife if I felt I needed to speak to anyone. It would never be the headmaster, he was too distant. He wasn't approachable. There were always other people who were more present in your life and you would rather speak with them. Some of the teachers like **QYL** and Graham Beattie, you felt you could talk to them, certainly as you got older. Mr Silcox, the padre, and **CDP** **CDP** were the ones you knew you could definitely talk to, the ones you knew cared about you.

#### **Discipline/Abuse at Queen Victoria School, Perth Road, Dunblane**

74. The first year I was there was right at the point when they were phasing out corporal punishment, but they still had the slipper and the cane. I don't remember who, but I remember one boy getting the cane. As well as this, that year and the next year they were still using the slipper. I was given the slipper a number of times along with a few other boys. After that corporal punishment was phased out completely.
75. **OLB** gave the slipper, **QYL** did as well. I can't remember the specific reasons, we weren't terribly unruly children. We were just kids causing

mischief but not on any worrying scale. Any misdemeanour could end up with you getting the slipper.

76. I remember in Wavell, in primary seven, there was a crackdown and there was a period of maybe two days where there was a queue of boys outside Mr OLB office waiting to get the slipper. and I went in the queue, got the slipper, then again about an hour later. That went on for what I think was the weekend. There was a short burst. It felt like a clampdown, I don't know why. Maybe they thought they weren't being disciplining enough.
77. I only remember those two giving the slipper. There was an office on the ground floor of Wavell House and that's where that was done. It was over the clothes, leaning over with your hands on a radiator and hit on the backside with a thick rubber soled slipper.
78. About 1989 or 1990 there was an incident at the school. A Mr Harrison came as a science teacher and I think he did electronics as a hobby as well. He was preyed upon by the kids because he was seen as weak and he was taken advantage of. He left the school in a fit of rage and went to the newspapers. There was a story about bullying at the school and the I was never involved in it, . No-one spoke to me about it, no-one . It was in relation to bullying at the school. As far as I'm aware he is still pursuing this accusation of bullying. I think there was an investigation and I believe it was seen as overblown.
79. It was a school filled with boys from nine to eighteen years old living in a sort of pressure cooker environment. There was no other place to go, so if there were problems they would carry on throughout your time at the school. Everyone had reasons to be upset about any number of things and they would take it out on each other. There was bullying, there was fighting, there was bickering, but not to the extent it was a scandal.

80. There were rumours about Ben Philips 'kiddy fiddling'. Those kind of malicious rumours are circulated and you never know if it's because those people have been punished and start spreading rumours. My own personal experience of Ben was that he was a religious person and I would never have a bad word said about him. But I know those rumours existed. I think he is dead now. I didn't see anything abusive going on.
81. Detention was a regular thing, for various lengths of time. You would sit in a room and copy a piece of Latin text as many times as you could over the time you were detained. Usually at the weekend, in your free time, you could be 'gated'. If you were it was over the weekend. Sometimes it would run over multiple weeks. What that meant was every now and again, at set times, you would go to the porters lodge and sign in. The idea was to confine you. You didn't have time to do anything. Any one of the teachers could give you this. The longer you were 'gated', the longer the time would be before you signed in. It could be from fifteen minutes up to three hours between signing in. It was for misdemeanours like answering back, fighting, things like that. There was no rule book. You learnt as you went along, what you could and couldn't do. The prefects issued the 'days'. I don't think they issued any other punishment. I can't remember.
82. I remember two people getting expelled while I was there. One guy, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was expelled while in Cunningham, in second or third year. I remember him sneaking in during the night, sitting at the side of our beds and wakening us. I don't know how he was getting in and I don't know why he was expelled. I remember him being what you would call a bad apple, but I wasn't particularly close to him. There was another expulsion when I was in Haig in fourth year. It was to do with drinking. An older boy got expelled. He was said to have led a young boy astray. I wouldn't say he was involved in any other wrong doing, he was caught drinking and got expelled. I don't think the Inquiry needs to know his name.
83. I don't think anyone was suspended, I can't remember that happening. I think it was disciplined, disciplined, disciplined, expelled.

84. If I think back to the clampdown thing in Wavell, in hindsight I'm surprised it was allowed to happen like that. It wasn't said, "I've seen your face earlier, I'm not going to keep doing this", and have a queue of the same boys over a couple of days and keep giving them the slipper. I can't understand why that was allowed to happen.
85. It didn't happen to me but there were prefects and monitors that would single boys out to do 'days', just because they could. It could be the overweight kid or the quiet, shy kid. There must have been a record because they had to have your name in a book, a log of who was given 'days', and how many, but I don't know if the reasons were logged.
86. In a place like QVS there's no child that had a normal childhood, which has a lasting effect. You have kids aged nine thrown in to an environment like that and just spat out at the other end. I didn't have a great sense of being developed as a human being, as a person growing into adulthood. There was no career advice. The thing with it being a Ministry of Defence sponsored school was to create the next generation of army, navy and air force. That was the overall goal of the place. Large numbers came out of that school and joined the forces, myself included.
87. There was a lot of things that you had in basic training that applied in school. It was the same sort of discipline. There were people that you were worried about. You could see them being picked on by other boys. You could see things in their behaviour that worried you. There was one boy, a year or two above me, called [REDACTED] [REDACTED] He had one of these compulsive mind sets. Every break in a school day you would see him washing in the bathroom, washing his hands, washing his face. He was always washing himself. That went on for years until he left and I don't know if this is fact but I heard some years ago that he took his own life after he left the school. I don't know how much of that washing was observed.
88. In my own experience, I was left to grieve without guidance and support from anyone, it was, "Go away and grieve but make sure you're in a classroom tomorrow morning". It's not a great experience for anyone to go through. There was nothing

really bad happened to me, except for being slippered for days on end and doing 'days' and being 'gated' and just having no freedom.

89. The only bad things that happened to me were that I remember blackboard rubbers being thrown at your heads or those big measuring tapes used for long jump being lobbed at you for whatever reason. The [REDACTED] teacher, Mr ECA, had an explosive temper. He was inclined to throw something across the room. The French teacher, Mr Buchanan, could be a bit of a disciplinarian as well. Mr QUH, the [REDACTED] teacher was always making kids do laps or throw measuring tapes at them. Mr Laing had a temper.
90. I always found Mr Beattie and Mr QYL to be nice guys. Mr QYL was on the trip to Germany and we went to a concentration camp and it affected him quite badly. I remember everyone gathering round him, supporting him, because he was a nice guy and people respected him.
91. If you were caught bullying you would be punished, if you weren't caught it carried on. I don't remember anyone being caught. I just know that it happened a lot. You would expect a little bit more oversight and supervision because it's the nature of boys in a place like that.
92. I've always felt in the broader sense that my experience at the school was alright. I know a lot of people who left the school and have never been back, myself included. There's something stopping us from going back. I don't know what it is but it's not because I thought it was a bad place. There were opportunities to go away and experience things you wouldn't normally. The canoeing trip was fantastic.
93. I know people left the school with abandonment issues. I have abandonment issues. I was chucked in there when I was nine. Relationships with people out with the school deteriorate and slip away. I remember going home on holidays and not really speaking to my parents. I'd go out early and come home at midnight. At that stage I didn't miss them anymore. Then you leave that place and go out in the world and

you're not prepared for it. You've been sheltered for years. To this day I'm trying to find my way around the world.

### **Leaving Queen Victoria School, Perth Road, Dunblane**

94. I only had the opportunity to do one more year and I'd have to choose different subjects. I had already been turned down for sixth form studies in biology. I left at sixteen. That was the end of my time. I left in June 1992 and started basic training in the army in the November. There were attempts to get a job in between times but nothing really bore any fruit.
95. I did feel retrospectively it was the natural progression to go in to the forces from that school. I wasn't encouraged to do anything else. It felt the natural next step to leave school and join the army. Part of the reason for that was that my dad was in the army too, there was a certain, "I want to do what my dad did". It wasn't forced but there was no discussion about doing anything else. Not everyone did. Some from my year went on to university and did other stuff, but most joined the forces throughout the school's history. There was careers advice, but there was no effort in shaping you on what you did next.

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

96. I spent five years in the army, left and started a career in IT. The beginning of that was software development. This was in 1999 for a private company in Bath, then I moved around a bit. My first kid was already born by then and I was dragging my family across the south of England and then settled down outside London, working in London.
97. I married a woman I met in the army. I married quite young. My son was born in 1998. I was already leaving the army and she left shortly after. I was a medic in the army and wanted to be a paramedic, but there was a five year waiting list because of the popularity of 'Casualty' and it didn't happen. I had to think of something else and saw an advert in the newspaper for software development and thought I'd give it a

go. I found I was reasonably good at it. I worked in Bath but that company was taken over by a firm in Croydon. I worked there but lived in Medway for a bit and my daughter was born in 2001. I then got a job with another private sector organisation and was there for eight years. I got divorced and moved into the public sector.

## **Impact**

98. It's sometimes really hard to know what affected you and in what way. I struggle to maintain relationships, particularly when people move on or you move on from jobs and you build friendships. I can't maintain that relationship beyond that point. I don't know if it was through school life and not building strong bonds. If I was to meet up with the boys I was at school with, it would probably be like no time had passed. But when you leave there you can't maintain that relationship. I do struggle with that.
99. The abandonment issue is that I'm more likely to abandon others rather than being abandoned. It's a coping mechanism. I would rather protect myself. My parents, brother, aunties, uncles, I don't really have much of a relationship at all, but I think to a certain extent I flipped that on its head with my own kids. Although I'm split up from their mum, I have a good relationship with my kids. I don't know if that's as a consequence. I don't want to be the dad that doesn't see his kids for twenty years, or die alone like my dad died and I hadn't seen him for fifteen years.
100. The school was all about activity, sports and physicality. Through all my life I've always been active and health conscious. That was like in the army too. So that has become a trait, no sport but health and fitness. It wasn't one of those darkest of places, it was just a place with lonely people. I think a lot of the kids felt they were tossed aside, I felt I was. I just felt there was no reason for me to go to that school, why was I split up from my brother? I think that decision died with my dad. I will never know. I didn't mix in with my brother so much when he came to the school. He took on the role of protector. If anyone was to pick on me they had to go through him first, which helped to a degree. But there was the element of, "Your brothers not here to protect you anymore, what are you going to do?"

101. If there's an impact on people's lives, if this was still going on, then I have to help. I've spoken to a few people over the last couple of years who had therapy for various reasons and they've always said how helpful it was. I'm not sure I'd be ready for that. I haven't sought any support or treatment.

### **Reporting of discipline/abuse at Queen Victoria School, Perth Road, Dunblane**

102. I have spoken to very few people about my childhood, full stop. I haven't reported anything to anybody about the school. There is a reluctance to open up about anything really. I don't know if that's because of the school. I don't talk about childhood experiences with many people, I'm not particularly open.

### **Records**

103. It would be subjective thinking about the type of records that should exist, rather than things I've seen. If you go back to the incident with the clampdown and the corporal punishment in Wavell House, there should be a record of every child that went through that, the number of times, the number of whacks they had along with the date and the reasons why. This should all be recorded. The detentions, 'days' and 'gating' should be recorded. Trips away should be recorded, who went where, and who authorised it. Travel records and where people went travelling around the world unescorted should be recorded. The travel warrant should also be recorded.
104. School reports must exist. I remember my mum giving me some that she kept in an envelope. I don't remember seeing any, I can only imagine they were posted straight home. I can't remember ever being handed one to take home. I didn't throw the one's my mum gave me away, but I haven't looked through them. I've never tried to get my school records at all. I don't know what they would tell me.



## **Lessons to be Learned**

105. One thing that is essential is contact with the outside world, maintaining the relationships, being given the tools to do that, to be encouraged. It has to be encouraged. The school is not your family. The school is not your life, your life exists outside those walls. Don't allow it to vanish, don't allow it to be affected in any way negatively. Don't let it be discouraged. The school is there to educate you and provide you with that pastoral care when your parents can't because they aren't there. But they have to remember that this is their job, they are there to look after you.
106. For a place like QVS, they shouldn't assume they own those children and assume that they are the next generation of military personnel. It's just an educational establishment. Let them grow but do it with consideration, do it with thought. Maybe the school should be in touch with the families, "Are you in touch with the children?", "Have they spoken to you?", every three months or so, "Have you received any letters?", "Are they ok?". There's that duty of care and responsibility. Letter writing for two years and the odd phone call here and there doesn't cut it.

## **Hopes for the Inquiry**

107. I stumbled across this Inquiry a little while ago, then I saw that my school, QVS, had been included and what the Inquiry are trying to achieve, and what it looks at. Not just sexual abuse but psychological and physical abuse. At QVS it was psychological abuse, maybe no intentional abuse, just passively psychologically abusing children who are vulnerable. If that was happening to any of the people I went to school with and I don't talk to the Inquiry about that school and try to help in any way I can, I'm not comfortable with that.
108. There were people there I didn't like, that's the nature of six hundred boys together. You're not going to like everybody. But the ones I got on with very well, my best friends, if anything was happening to them, and I didn't know that at the time, they need some justice and if they are struggling, then I would want to help.

**Other information**

109. 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.

DocuSigned by:  
**ZLE**  
89EEC13598A94FE...

Signed.....

22 October 2020

Dated.....