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Maybe just tell me about your diary and how you start and how long you've kept it for and what you kind of write about.

Ok I think I've always had the diary since about, maybe about the age of 6. And at least I will update it on my birthday which is the middle of June and then on January as well, and then any significant event, more emotionally triggered. I wouldn't do it because of exams, I'd do it because I felt something because of those exams. That's kind of like my driver for it. And in addition I also keep a collection of like mementos. So I know that my sister keeps concert tickets, it's not concert tickets for me, I've got stuff like sweet wrappers like maybe not with old bits of sweets to it, but something like that that means stuff to me.

So quite sort of everyday sort of things?

Yeh yeh, they're all through the ordinary. There's nothing really... particularly... I'll go through them at the front. I've got postcards as well.. so people have sent me stuff. Let's see I've got some tickets here although I've just said that I don't do that. I've got wee like mementos or sayings, I quite like writing wee quotes down as well, so if I've heard a really good quote I'll write that down just because I like it. Yeh and just really, I've got quite a lot of postcards, letters. A sweet wrapper, a bus ticket.

And do you remember how you started?

How I started collecting stuff or how I started writing diaries?

I mean both really.

I don't know where it came from, I was inspired... I guess I loved the idea of a diary but I don't know if it was a tv character, I'll have a think about that. I imagine it's something.. like a character.

But did your parents never... does your mum keep a diary?

My mum keeps scraps but not really a diary.

And.. I've got a few sort of practical questions and about like how you actually do it and what you write on and what it looks like and then I'll ask you a bit about your motivations and to look back on a couple of things in particular. So how many times a year do you write? 3 or 4 or not as often as that?

Probably about 6 times a year, including the one at christmas and one at birthdays. So four times outwith that on average.

And what's that like, you spend an evening or just a moment? What's the actual writing process?

Usually it will be in the evening I would say, like sit down and do it in an evening. In saying that, I've kind of started like typing, so if I've got something I want to get off my chest and I don't have my diary to hand because I don't carry it around, I keep it in my room, I'll write it down on another bit of paper and I'll staple it in. Or I've started writing it down like digitally. So I usually have my iPad on me all the

time so I write it as like a note.

And do you copy it out later?

Not yet - I have intentions to print it out more than copy it out. I don't think I've got the pat... It's not really great writing Chris!

How much are you writing each time and how detailed would you say it is?

I'm gonna have a look... but on average - 3,4,5,6,7,8,9... about... 23rd birthday last year I did, (counting pages...) 9 pages. Is that B5? Oh ok? More than A5, less than A4. But that was for like my updates... the one's I do biannually are like 9 or 10 pages long, and the others one's I'd say are 2 or 3 pages.

And would you say that's like what you've been doing or is it very much your personal thought process, how reflective would you say your writing is?

Very reflective, more than what goes on in it. Like not really the activity, it's more kind of how I felt through it. In my updates, I call them updates... well I call them to you, I've never really thought about it before. That's all kind of structured. But I go through like, it starts off with kind of like, the headlines change in terms of order with no particular structure. But I'll go through things like family, I'm gonna say education/career stuff, because I suppose now it's like [my work] where as before it was more academic stuff, friendship circles. I always do a hopes for the future about what I want to get out of the next 6 months. I have a reflection on if I've progressed in any of those places or if anything's changed.

And where do you keep it at home, is it quite a private place?

Erm.. well because I live in this room, and no ones gonna come in I don't mind where it lives here. When I was a bit younger and I was living at home I would have kept it in my bedside drawer but I don't think anybody would have looked there. I'd say I was probably quite private about it.

Is it something you would talk to people about? Something you talk about doing, or is it a very private activity?

I don't think many people realise that I do it but I think a few probably do. Like... erm, because occasionally, I kind of try and mix things up a bit. I don't always write in like kind of first person. I'll try do it in like 3rd person, I've dabbled at languages in it. I'll not read you out those chapters! (laughter) I'll try mix up the writing styles or stuff. My housemate, he doesn't keep a diary, but he kind of keeps scraps of when things have meant something... he writes poetry and kind of descriptive stuff. So I would say I was maybe like influenced by like his diary writing, because we've talked about it and shared that.

So you've shared each others entries?

Yeh! I've read him read mine, but he's the only person I've let read it.

So would you say your diary writing is quite a creative exercise then?

Probably.

And yeh is it just writing, or would you say you draw, or.. all that sort of other stuff.. the postcards and newspaper clippings and all that stuff - is that attached to the diary at all or are they separate things?

I keep them in an elastic band in the front. And then I've got a rose once Chris, and I've pressed that once in the diary. How bad is that! I've got drawings I suppose, a little, sometimes when I can't be bothered writing and I've not got the time and I want to sketch I'll do something like that. If I've got like.. even things like if I've had like feedback or something I needed to print out or clippings from newspapers, I've put that in it too. I like the idea of it being a bit more creative than just pen and ink. My writing's not quite entice enough to pull that off.

And when you look back at it... how often would you say what you've written before?

I've never read what I've written. **No? It's not even..** I've only read it once when, James was my housemate and we were going over it, and he was like what about this.. he let me see it then and I read it and I started laughing. I like the idea that in my old age I'll look at it but I'm not looking at it now.

Like are you curious about it? Do you have to stop yourself reading it? Or are you just never interested?

I'm curious.. but I think it would be too cringy! (laughter) I kind of roughly know what's in it as well. Like I remember this one time that my mum made me go... swimming. With like.. right she was taking me, my sister, my sister's friend swimming. And my sister's friend who had a brother in my class, and I didn't want to go swimming with him. So I remember writing that in my diary, and I know that I wrote about it, but I've no idea what I said, I just remember not wanting to go with him because he was a bit boisterous and would kick about, because I was his age I'd be expected to hang about with him as Mhairi and Katie went off.

Even this interview and things - did you think that you would look back it? Have you taken a conscious decision then not to sort of look back it?

No, I've not looked back at it.

Is there anything missing? Or thrown anything away or lost anything? Is it just this one book?

I've got a few books that I've started, so in my endeavours to start a new diary and keep it up for a month, sometimes that's involved starting a new book. Or like I said, I'll write on scrap paper so like.. so if there was something that was really bothering me and I didn't have my diary to hand I would write it on scrap paper and not always has that made it to be in the diary.

Do you think you get more out of writing it than you will looking back at it? Yeh. Obviously you've not read it yet - but is it something you're thinking about I definitely will read that in the future and I'm excited at looking back at what it will be?

Erm.. it's kind of like... You ever had a disposable camera, and you've taken the pictures with such great poise, and you've enjoyed taking the pictures and positioning people, you know you've only got 27 stamps, you're gonna make them count, and then when you get the film back, there's some prints on them somebody looking out of shape.. that's what I imagine my diary will be like!

What would you say overall why you keep the diary and what do you get out of it most?

I think I get quite a lot of... I get a lot of time to reflect on my thoughts and what it means to me and because I don't necessarily write it in the first person, or because even when I'm writing in the first person I'm reading it kind of back when you're writing it, you kind of analyse yourself a bit more, and you kind of maybe think, this sounds pathetic, this isn't an argument to be had, and you'll stop writing and then I'll go speak to my sister. I know I've used that example a lot, it's just because obviously during my childhood she's obviously the main driver for a lot of the text.

And you ever found something you've found hard to do or have you always been quite motivated?

Because I know that I'm only gonna do it twice a year and the other times are because I want to it's never been a chore. But keeping it up for a month, that was well too much. It was just because it was really mundane, and then you find yourself writing the whole day, rather than the best part of the day, or like something you should take away from it.

When it's coming up to your birthday is it something you look forward to doing? Is it quite an event?

Yeh... I'd say so. It's something that I do for myself. I don't do it for anybody else. And like you said I probably do keep it a bit more of a secret and because I know that I'm gonna do it I'll look forward to it.

To what extent - how much do you think about what you're gonna write before you start writing?

Not very much. That's not to say... I'm quite a reflective person, so my day to day life I'm continually having thoughts about how I act and how I'm perceived and all that kind of stuff. I wouldn't say it goes unthought, it's just not related to the diary at that point. I find it quite easy it kind of flows off my pen.

And you said you spend like an evening doing this - you usually find it's quite easy?

It's quite easy - sometimes it's kind of like a bit difficult when you're writing about a difficult subject. Because you write in your diary stuff that the times you didn't come across as the most marvellous person in the world. But I think it's always quite good to face up to those times because it can only make you better in the long term.

You talk about it being a way to kind of analyse yourself a bit. Is there anything you else you do that does that for you?

I've got some really good friends - that we'll talk about things like that all the time. We'll get real deep Chris, real deep! Even working at [my work] we've had so many training things like that. We've had a lot of, I don't want to use the word counselling, because I don't think its the right word, but coaching. Coaching would be better.

Is there anything else - do you record anything else about yourself?

I don't keep a blog or anything like that or a tumblr?

Do you record anything like your activity or what you're eating or that sort of stuff?

Oh not really. I suppose the only thing really is my work calendar.

I think it's really interesting you said you had not looked back on it. How interested would you say you are in your past?

I don't think that I'm skilled enough to tell me what my past has been, to trigger who I am now. And I don't necessarily know that my diary would give me that insight.

What sort of feelings do you think you would have if you looked back at it?

Well I was laughing when I read it to James because it sounded really pathetic. But the diary that I showed you there, it's the only one that I've got with me because my other ones are back in [my hometown], my historical ones. So that book was actually given to me before I went to [on ERASMUS]. The first page is like, me writing on the plane, when I'm going there. And like, I feel I've not grown up that much compared to what I was then. Like when I read I'm like - yeh he was a dick! Whereas I think at the back of my mind, that I'm kinda like.. it looks very melodramatic.

You've got these books, and these mementos.. how completely would you say that captures your life in anyway or who you are?

Right... you know how you have your personal life, and your public life, and your work life and all of those kind of things. I don't think that like your personal life is any more of your real self than your professional self or work self. So I would say it capture a lot of my personal thoughts, but I wouldn't say that that was my whole character to any extent. And I wouldn't say that the other parts were any faker because I have a kind another part of me.

And likewise compared to something - if I said how much does Facebook capture your life -

aw nut. Ok, nothing. I wouldn't... there's nothing that I wouldn't write in my diary. I would say that if you were to read it, it would look probably a lot mor negative, because I think I record more of the negatives than the positives. So if you were to read it, it would bring a tear to a glass eye.

Awww...Some of the stuff that I've seen. But that's only because that's the stuff that's maybe bothered me the most whereas if I'm happy it tends to be with people.

You said before you had a lot of deep conversations with people, if it's something that you had spoken a lot with someone do you think would you record it?

Yeh I think so. Yeh if it's an event that's had an impact on my life. I know myself if I was struggling with anything I tend to bounce my situation against people to find out what the echoes are. Before I have to make up my mind about it. Those people give me an opinion and a voice and a take on how it is. It won't be until like maybe I write it down that I'll clarify in my mind where I stand on it.

(Asking if she wants to look back at her diary)

(Long pauses - taking a look through)

It's weird because sometimes I tell stories of like events, as if in the 3rd person, I'm trying to think.. there's a section that's a bit more uniform or reflective, hold on...

Is it just in sort of chronological order?

No, it's not. I get sick sometimes of how messy my writing is. So I'll just leave big chunks and start again. It's always got a date on it. Erm..

...

Yeh if it's ok I'd rather not look back.

But if I can just sort of ask - even there, just there what did it feel like when you were looking back there.

Well.. it's weird to see your life in a page, a couple of pages. Do you know what I mean? It feels, almost a wee bit insignificant that I'm managed to summarise 6 months into 10 pages.

(Giving example of a participant keeping all holidays crammed in two books - it's such a fast forward through life, but in some ways such a broad perspective)

Do you think when you look back at them it will be a quite pleasurable experience or something you would rather not look at.

I'd like to think that in a lot of the time when I've written I've maybe not been in the best frame of mind. I'd like to think that in the future I'll be in a better frame of mind and I'll look back on it and think, yeh maybe you were a bit daft.

Is it something you think is really important you hold on to?

I wouldn't be gutted if I couldn't look back on it, I'd be worried if it went into the wrong hands because it's so personal.

But if it went up in flames tomorrow?

If it went up in flames I don't think I'd be that bothered by it. That's perhaps because I've got other copies in the house. Because that one's maybe more recent, it's maybe not as memorable. Whereas like to think that the ones that I had when I was 7 or 8, and are just full of pictures and what happened are - I'd like to think that they're a bit more cherishable.

So these are pretty reflective, your thoughts and things... do you ever desire more details of everyday life, of where you've been and what sort of time - you know in a way if you were kind of keeping a record everyday, it might be kind of mundane but it would tell you what you were doing?

Not really. I think if you look back on it you would just be depressed how many hours you felt in traffic or you know at the office or something. You know how with google or with apple, you can go back and look at like the places you've been. So we were doing that on one of my friends phones and he was like this is ridiculous - the amount of time he had been at his girlfriends and the gym outweighs his times when he's been at home or his parents added up!

How do you think it compares to things like that? Looking back at the past in that way, when you've got a bunch of places, or photographs or something like that?

I think a diary's maybe a bit more about the qualitative than it is the quantitative. If you're doing for statistics... if you're doing it like, because maybe you're an athlete and you're doing it for weights and training or whatever, then it's very handy on a statistical level, and you can say this time I bench pressed more than I did three years ago.. but I don't have any driver to do that so..

DO you keep photo albums and things like that?

I should do... what happened was when I was a kid, my mum was in charge of the photo albums and she hated it, she hated doing it. And when digital cameras came in she just stopped doing them. And I find it quite hard to go back and look back at pictures. Because a lot of the time - you'll know yourself - if it's pictures that you've taken when you were [on ERASMUS] or like holiday or even just school ones and things, those people aren't around in the same.. childlike states that you remember them. So I find it quite bittersweet. I find it very hard to do so.

Do you look back at photos on Facebook or anything at all.

For the same reason - I very rarely upload albums to Facebook.

And do you find yourself taking a lot of photographs?

Probably more so than I realise, yeh.

But you like being behind the lens rather than in the photographs.

Nah, I don't mind being in the photographs because I know I won't look at them! (laughter)

I should probably search for them, because there's loads of uploaded albums I should probably take a copy of them, that I've got them for myself but I've never really got round to it.

Right ok, another thing that I quite like though.. I was driving back from Scotland on Sunday night and it was really really foggy.. and I don't know if you saw it but the moon was incredible on Sunday night. It was beautiful. And I loved the idea that I've seen that, and I know that it's in my head, but if I was to take a picture I

know it wouldn't do it justice. Same way that seeing the eclipse - you can see it on the TV but it's not the experience that you've had.

And you feel that taking a photo of that would somehow get in the way that?

Yeh... it's a poor replication of what you've experienced.

You said you had started typing things up, but did you ever think about making these things digital or do you think it will always be sort of written?

Erm.. I quite like paper because i make mistakes and I think when I type things I'm a bit more accurate. I like that I've kind of got flaws in my writing, that I don't always spell things correctly, I use the same word a lot.. and I feel like just because of my nature I'd be more inclined to read it through and make sir sit made sense if it's typed rather than when it's written.

What do you think you will do with your diaries in the future? Do you think you will keep it up and when do you expect you might look at them?

I think I'd like to look back at them with someone, I don't know who. Like - I don't know whether I'd actually quite like to look back at them with my sisters - I say that because she obviously features really heavily in my younger ones. But I think it would be really good to look back with her. And to see if she remembers any of the events that I might not even remember by then.

And do you expect to keep it up?

Yeh. I like it, I like doing it.

So you think when you're 50... you'll have 44 years of your life in books!

Yeh! They might not exist... I might have burnt a few, a few might have been lost. But I think I'll still do it because I still get so much out of it in the moment.

Once you've done them, how does that feel after you've finished your entry?

Well because I always finish on a high note, and I always intentionally have a hope for the future or like what I'm gonna do about it. So when I was reading one of my diaries - I've got a bit about finances. 'Yeh it's fucked mate, but it's ok, once you've finished this diary we're gonna count up the pennies and work out a plan!' Which I have to say never happened but I always try and spin it into a 'what will come, what will the action be from the experience.

How do you sort of describe them to other people? Do you call them diaries?

Yeh I probably call them diaries, because it's the easiest thing to describe them. I think the people that are closest to me know that i have them. But they just don't really come up in conversation otherwise. Like I said, we have quite a lot of training modules and with like coaching sessions we had like one-to-ones. And I brought them along, to like show that, you know like you've obviously got parts of your personality you wanna get a bit better at. So I brought them along as like a kind of like a 'this is what I want to discuss' because it's bothered me for quite a

number of years.

[Comment on idiosyncrasy of diaries]

Yeh cause, like James, his diaries are so different. They're nothing that I would ever have put in a diary. Because his is all really reflective on like, his environment at that time and that moment. And it's not like travel journals either, he's got a few like notes from when he's been abroad and stuff like that. But it's been like poetry about the tree that's next to him, and like the grass under his feet. And it is a diary, because it reflects his mood based on his... because he has pushed his mood onto the environment as if it's the environment that's created it and not him.