Witness Name: Ian Cobbledick
Statement No.: WITN2103001
Exhibits: NONE
Dated: 10th December 2018

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF IAN COBBLEDICK

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 10th December 2018.

I, Ian Cobbledick, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Ian Cobbledick My date of birth is the GRO-C 1972. My address is known to the Inquiry. I am in the middle of a divorce currently and living by myself. I am unemployed due to medical reasons. I intend to speak about my step mum Corrine Cobbledick and her infection of hepatitis C and HIV. In particular, the nature of her illness, how the illness affected her, the treatment received and the impact it had on her and our lives together as a family up until her death. A lot of the information provided in this statement comes from Corrine's own diaries, using her own words

where appropriate. Please be aware that Mum did not date a lot of the entries as the diary was being recorded as notes that she was going to use to assist her in writing a book later on.

Section 2. How Affected

2. On the 11th or 12th January 1984, Mum was given 4 units of blood as part of a lifesaving transfusion. She had internal bleeding due to an ectopic pregnancy. She had been misdiagnosed by two separate General Practitioners who went to her home at her request. They advised bed rest. Eventually the pain was so bad she went to the local health centre, Craigshill Health Centre, The Mall, Livingston, where an ambulance was called. She was rushed to Bangor Hospital, Livingston where she had to have her womb removed due to the damage and also lost her right ovary.

3. In March 1986, Mum was asked to come to her General Practitioner for a blood test as the doctor thought she was exhibiting anaemic symptoms. This worried Mum as she indicates in her diary. "*I am 40 and have never been anaemic in my life*". When the results came back, her General Practitioner said that he was not qualified to give her the results. He advised her that she had to go to hospital to receive these. Before she left the appointment with the GP she asked him if it had anything to do with "*That bloody AIDS*". He would not tell her. She went to the City Hospital, Greenbank in Edinburgh expecting answers, but only to find that another blood test was being conducted. A week later she returned and on the day of her terminally ill son, Colin's birthday she was told she was HIV positive. She was told they knew how she was infected and they knew the person that had donated the infected blood.

4. Mum lost her battle with HIV and hepatitis C on the 8th of April 1995. She was only told that she was HIV positive in 1986. She did not find out that she had also contracted hepatitis C until 1994 when Dr Brettle

ran extra tests due to Mum having been admitted to hospital for a week having been seriously ill. We still do not know why it took so long for the hepatitis C to be detected.

5. There was never any discussion about the risks associated with receiving a blood transfusion. It was a case of she needed this or she would have died.

6. Mum was not told much about the infection, in those days not that much was known about it. The doctors told her to take precautions to limit the spread of the disease. The hospital insisted they did not know about HIV at the time. All they could tell her was that it came from 2 units of the four she was given and that it had come from a blood donor from an American prison.

7. When we (the family) were told about what was wrong, we were told that the newspapers had it wrong and that doctors were working on a cure. Everything would be ok and that the only way the disease could be passed on was through blood to blood contact. At the time there were not many questions that could be answered about HIV, Mum and Dad (John Leslie Cobbledick) were not given any information that would help.

8. Sometime later she asked her GP why was her blood taken in the way it was to test for HIV. She was told, because of her son's illness they wanted to be sure that their suspicions were correct before telling her. She writes in her diary that it had been a "*Group decision*" to do it that way. She was told they were checking people like her who they knew had been given the HIV infected blood through transfusions.

9. Mum writes in her diary that the doctor at the hospital had a "*Good talk*" with her and made an appointment for one month later. When she went back it was only for another talk and an appointment made with a counsellor. She did attend two meetings with the councsellor, but says

she thought it was not for her, as it would not change what had happened.

10. Mum was not told much about the infection, in those days not that much was known about it. The doctors told her to take precautions to limit the spread of the disease. The hospital insisted they did not know about the disease at the time it was given to her. All they could tell her was that it came from 2 units of the four she was given and that it had come from a blood donor from an American prison.

11. Most of the information she had, we all had, came from the horrendous headlines in the newspapers at the time. We will never forget the stories that HIV was spread by gay people and drug abusers. Please note. She was only told that she was HIV positive. She did not find out she had also contracted Hepatitis C until 1994 when Dr Brettle had run extra tests and treatments due to my mum having been admitted for a week seriously ill.

Section 3. Other Infections

12. Yes, as stated, Mum was diagnosed with hepatitis C, 8 years after she was told she had contracted HIV. She was told she had contracted hepatitis C at the same time she had contracted HIV but was not advised of this until it was too late.

Section 4. Consent

13. I don't think she was tested on without her knowledge or consent, because she would say that even if they didn't help her they would help someone else.

14. I do however think that due to the drugs at the time, even the doctors could not tell her about any side effects that may happen or how a certain drug would make her worse as they didn't know themselves.

15. When I was 14 or 15 years old, I do remember talking to Mum about the tablets she was on. There were a lot. I can remember Mum and Dad sitting for ages checking and double checking that she had them on time and the right ones. She did mention that most of them were new, that some were being tested and that she was happy to be testing them, even when some of them made her very ill.

Section 5. Impact

16. The only word I can use is devastating. That word still to me does not describe the impact it had on Mum. Before she was told she had HIV she used to play darts for Scotland, she had many, many trophies. I remember having to help Dad make special shelves because they weighed so much. I used to love looking at them and the pictures of her playing with the likes of Eric Bristow, she used to do a lot of charity matches. All that just stopped.

17. Mum always had a zest for life. Nothing would drag her down it seemed. All through her illness, she fought. We had to be careful with colds or the flu, we had to stay away from her in case she got it. If she got just a little cold you could see her struggling, we spent days wondering if that cold she just got, would be the end, she got so ill so quickly. She lost a lot of weight. There always seemed to be problems with her feeding tube, I remember dad struggling sometimes to get it working right.

18. She made toys for Children in Need, all the time lots of them and sold them locally to raise money for the charity, we used to be tripping over stuffed teddies and animals. That kept her busy. I think helping others helped her a lot. I remember my dad, my brothers and I spent weeks building a conservatory for her so she could be as near to outside as she could. We built pens for finches so she could sit and watch them whilst making her toys for charities. I remember Dad telling me about

his 'mates' all disappearing as well. It must have been so hard making sure we were all alright at the same time looking after Mum.

19. Mum was always on different drugs. You could tell that a new drug she was trying was making her ill. She would say "*I've not had this one before, this is new*" and then I would start to see a change in her shortly after, which would reveal how her body was coping. She was gaunt, grey and ill, she would spend days in bed. She was fighter, so you could tell she was having a bad reaction when it meant she had to stay in bed.

20. I don't know if she had any trouble accessing treatments. I think she just took what she was asked to take.

21. If the hepatitis C had been diagnosed earlier, then maybe she would have had a better chance and access to those drugs for hepatitis C at the time rather than waiting until 1994 when it was too late.

22. Her infected status certainly caused problems and embarrassment. I remember her telling us one day about going to the health centre. When her notes came out from reception, the letters HIV were written two inches high in bright red letters on the front cover of her notes. Mum demanded that this be removed from the front of her records. It was removed by the doctor, only for her to find, that the next time she went it was there again. It was removed again and this kept happening. When she visited her dentist, her appointment would always be the very last appointment of the day. When she went into the room it was laid out like an operating theatre, everything covered in blue wrap and the dentist himself covered from head to toe wearing a full face plastic visor. Her diaries are full of notes along these lines. I can only imagine how she felt. The worst I saw was at her funeral. Her coffin was covered in a tarp. The flowers were used to hold it down. I thought my dad was going to have a heart attack that day. He had to tell the funeral director to take it off before everyone arrived.

23. The only word I can use is devastating. Devastating, still to me, does not describe the impact it had on Mum. Before she was told she had HIV, she used to play darts for Scotland, she had many, many trophies. I remember having to help my dad make special shelves because they weighed so much. I used to love looking at them and the pictures of her playing with the likes of Eric Bristow, she used to do a lot of charity matches.

24. Personally for me, the day we were sat down and told what was happening has shaped my life since. I was in my last year of high school, at exam time. To be honest I was having a hard time as it was. Then to be told that your mum has this AIDS disease, just turned my head to mush. The papers were, it seemed, shouting out about this 'killer disease', it was spread by gay people and drug abusers. The playground was full of kids joking about it. We even had to go along with those jokes, in fear that someone would find out. We hid. I had no one I could talk to about it, most of my exams, most of the time I was at school, is just a blur. I failed just about every subject, even the ones I was actually doing well in. I left school with no qualifications, all this happening around me and to be honest not much hope. I discuss this further in point 31. The next few years we all kept quiet, doing the best we could be dealing with it. For us it seemed the world was ending and no one would help us and there was just nothing we could do.

25. In 1995 a newspaper article was published that Dad had provided to The Sun Newspaper telling Corrine's story. I refused to participate in this article as I had such a hard time at school, so my image is not included with the article. The hope was that it would help if the truth came out. Unfortunately, it had the opposite effect. People just did not understand what AIDS was and the stigma was still really bad. Dad struggled keeping the house, he had lost his part time job because the guy that owned the garage said he couldn't work there anymore.

29. For me; the stress, the fights I was getting in, it was all too much. All my friends disappeared overnight it seemed. Without knowing it, I had depression and when my girlfriend walked out on me I tried to end my life in October 1998.

30. Our entire family imploded. For silly reasons we all fell out with each other and went our separate ways. Myself and my brothers all changed our names and tried to start new lives. It was the stress of dealing with what had happened, the hiding and people's reactions that really caused our family to split apart. I cannot express how bad the stress of all this was.

31. I moved to Wolverhampton, as far away from Scotland as I could get in 1998.

32. When I told my new doctor about my stomach problems and constant heartburn I was sent to the hospital where I had to have an emergency operation to repair my stomach and was diagnosed with Barrett's oesophagus, a serious complication caused by GERD, (gastroesophageal reflux disease). I now live with a nasty chance of a potentially fatal cancer of the oesophagus. I was shattered when I was told. I blurted everything out to this new doctor, told him why I had moved to Wolverhampton, everything that had happened. He explained that instead of getting an ulcer due to the stress and coping with the anxiety, it had instead manifested itself as GERD. I now have to swallow a camera to see if any cancerous cells are there four times a year. I am always reminded about what caused it in the first place. That same doctor arranged the only help I have had for all this. I saw a psychiatrist for six sessions and managed to get my life back on track kind of.

33. A few more years passed and I ended up moving to Devon. Dad had moved there a few years earlier after losing his house in Scotland. We patched things up and started working together with 'Tainted Blood' and other forums. For years we've campaigned, sometimes sitting together,

crying our hearts out, trying to write letters explaining what's happened, reliving our story over and over again. We have been waiting for the next glimmer of hope for years, only to be dashed as Bills didn't get into the House of Commons. We would write to our local MP, only to be told that they can't help that day by voting. I'm sorry to say that our MP Mr GRO-D has been no help to us at all. Personally the day we finally met him, when he told us both and I quote- "*It's kind of like a car crash it was an accident, not all accident victims get compensation*" was the day I gave up on any help from him.

34. I still to this day cannot figure out, when my dad and I spent most of our time explaining, writing letter upon letter, explaining why we wanted answers to why it happened, we wanted just a sincere sorry for the life it's caused us, we wanted everybody involved to get answers, and yes compensation for the misery caused, he chose just to answer the compensation side of it. Nothing else. It's like we didn't exist.

35. I know we've put a miniscule amount into fighting for justice compared to some of the campaigners, MP's and lawyers but this whole thing. These years of fighting and living lies, its consumed any chance of a normal life! It has honestly ruined not just the lives of those infected, but every single person and family around those infected. In ways that we just do not have the time and space and energy left to explain. We all thought the Penrose Inquiry would finally get those answers we had been working for. It was all going to be worth it. But no, even that did not happen. This has been my life. A constant fight for answers. Constantly let down.

36. After Penrose and after the split that happened with some of the forums because of the different cases between whole bloods and haemophiliacs, to me, (not because of the forums) because of my state of mind and the depression that had sneaked back, the start of yet another fight, another round of begging, fighting to get somewhere, last November was the last straw. I had without a doubt given up the fight.

Unfortunately, in a massive way that this time was out of my control. I had been struggling for a while. Depression yet again took over in November 2017. I had a complete breakdown and ended trying to end my life. For two weeks my family were told I would not make it. I very nearly didn't. My marriage of 12 years ended, and I now have to fight to see my two wonderful boys. It turns out, on top of everything else, I've been handling all this with ADHD, a very real and debilitating disorder. I'm not saying all this was caused by what happened, But I can't help thinking, sitting here, trying to convey just how badly things have affected my life, but every single person touched by this disaster. How much better things would have been if it had not happened, and I had not spent all of my adult life, 32 years trying in vain to work it all out.

37. I thought I was a strong man. But years of emotional problems and constantly being beaten down by the events that have happened, by the brick walls we have faced over trying to get answers, even simple things like insurance and now, Barrett's syndrome has ruined my life.

38. My brothers and sister all have GRO-C GRO-C. Some of us still have different surnames. We all live as far apart as you could imagine with my youngest brother living in New Zealand. We all love each other, but there is no denying it, it has affected us in different ways. GRO-C
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GRO-C. Mum always said her suffering would help others, good things would come of it, not for one moment did I think it would ever be so close to home. Even after that, I still know, I've suffered nothing compared to most other people affected by this.

39. The NHS robbed the world of the most caring, wonderful, thoughtful, unselfish, mother, gran and wife from this planet through no fault of her own. Anyone that met her would have told you that she was an amazing woman, destined to make a difference to a lot of people. It caused untold misery, every single day that this disaster has been allowed to carry on. How am I, or anyone else, can even be expected to explain that in a way you would understand.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

40. I have never received or been offered counselling resulting from this. I received some therapy some years ago when I had been diagnosed with Barrett's syndrome. However, at that time neither I or my councillor realised just how much damage had been done.

41. I have only just been given help arising from my overdose last November. I have only just started telling my story to people who are trying to put together what caused the overdose. My ADHD diagnosis was three days ago. Again I've only managed to explain a little about what has happened. I have some very confused professionals trying to sort this very complicated situation out. I've hidden this for years, bottled it all up for these years, this is the first time I've managed to tell them the truth of it all. I am seeing first-hand the state of mental health in the NHS at the moment. It's a mess. I've seen a psychiatrist twice in a year, waited 18 months for the ADHD assessment, only to find the doctor working with me is retiring. There are four doctors in the whole of Devon and Cornwall that are dealing with adults with ADHD,

42. I certainly cannot afford to seek private help.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

43, Personally I have received nothing from the trusts. I've never asked as money has never been the reason I've devoted my time to this. And as far as I have been aware nothing has been made available for close family and people not directly related to the infected. I have never been asked or made aware that there is any financial help for anyone other than the infected or their widows. Any form of help has been extremely hard to find information about. If it was not for Dad's connections to forums and the work he put into campaigning, he would not have been told or found out what was available. To this day it's unbelievably hard to work out what's available.

44. In the early 90's through a solicitor in Scotland, Brian Donald, who fought for compensation, told my parents about the Eileen trust. They managed to get £300 a month until Mum died. My dad then received £100 a month. That stopped five or six years ago. Due to the process he has never applied since. In 1993 they were awarded £85,000 from the Scottish Government after signing a disclaimer agreeing never to try to seek any other compensation. That was only after some hard work. He had to prove who he was, that he was married to Mum and filled in what seemed to be countless forms and sending loads of proof. He was awarded first £20,000 from the Skipton fund, then again after some more paperwork and frankly things that made him feel awful, he was awarded £30,000 as a stage two payment.

45. Technically, on paper, Corinne was our step mum. She made more of an impact on my life than any person before or since. But apparently that counts for nothing. As far as my brothers, sister and I are concerned, she is and always will be our mother. My dad did gain some assistance. The entire process was unbelievably hard, and even then he was made to feel as if he was begging. After some hard work, having to prove who

he was, that he was married to my mum and filling in what seemed to be countless forms and sending in a lot of proof, he was awarded assistance by the Skipton Fund. The process he went through to be awarded the money he did receive, made him feel awful and still affects him today.

46. In 1993, Mum and Dad were awarded £85,000 from the Scottish Government after signing a disclaimer agreeing never to try to seek any other compensation.

47. To this day Dad still feels guilty about receiving that. We still have to tell him he was awarded that for a reason. He worked all his life. Hard. He's old school where he has had to work to earn every penny he has made to provide for us. The process he went through to be awarded the compensation he did receive, made him feel awful and still affects him today. Any form of help has been extremely hard to find information about. To this day it's unbelievably hard to work out what's available.

Section 8. Other Issues

48. All I ask is that this Inquiry does not go the same way as the Penrose Inquiry. Please just give us the answers we have been looking for all these years. Help us understand why it happened and make those responsible pay at least, some price for this complete mess that has ruined so many lives in so many ways. Let us finally have some justice and just maybe a little peace to it all. Maybe then we can finally mourn our loved ones. Let us move on with what is left of our lives. All I want is for my dad to get the justice he deserves. My mum passed not gaining any respect, answers or apologies. I don't want him passing without an end to it all.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed GRO-C

Dated 20 december 2018 -