

Witness Name: Mark Sutton Gilbert

Statement No.: WITN3735001

Exhibits: WITN3735002

Dated: March 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MARK SUTTON GILBERT

I, Mark Sutton Gilbert, will say as follows:-

Section 1: Introduction

1. My name is Mark Sutton Gilbert and my address is GRO-C
GRO-C and my date of birth is GRO-C 1961. I
am married to my second wife and we have a daughter, Georgia, who is now 18.
I work for Hewlett Packard Enterprise as an account manager selling data storage
systems to banks.
2. I provide this statement in relation to my father, Myer Gilbert who was known as
"Monty". He was born on GRO-C 1933 and he passed away on 22 May 1975.

Section 2: How Infected

3. I am not aware of when my father was diagnosed with haemophilia. I remember
that we moved to Gloucester in either 1967 or 1968. Shortly after we moved my

father started to become ill. As a child I noticed that my father was spending time in bed which I did not expect. Later, that time in bed became time in hospital.

4. As a haemophiliac my father would bruise easily and I remember seeing the bruises on his legs and his arms. Sometimes they were big bruises under the skin and I think that is what the doctors were originally trying to treat. I believe that he contracted Hepatitis in the early 1970s from a blood transfusion when they were trying to treat his haemophilia.
5. I can remember my father regularly staying for quite long stints in hospital, anywhere from two to six weeks. Which, again, from about the age of nine or ten onwards I never thought "*oh this could be serious*". At the time I just took it in my stride.
6. Prior to moving to Gloucester my father had not had anything particularly wrong with him. It was only when the bruises started appearing and the hospital then trying to treat those, that things started to go wrong for him.
7. My father was given blood products to treat his bleeds over a six or seven year period. I do not know which blood products my father was given whilst he was being treated or whether he was ever provided with any advice in relation to any risks involved. It is during this period that I believe he was infected with Hepatitis and HIV.
8. My father's last illness started in early 1975 and he attended what was then called Gloucester Royal Infirmary which was in South Street in Gloucester. I believe that was when the hospital gave him most of the blood plasma, but of course they had been treating his bleeds for years prior to this. I do not think the doctors, at that point, really had much idea of what the implications were. As a 13-year-old I was very much kept away from it all. I do not recall my mother ever confiding in me that this was particularly risky for my father or that any discussions had taken place about the implications this may have for him.

9. I distinctly remember my mother telling me that the doctors had decided that removing my father's spleen may help things, may enable him to be cured. So they removed his spleen. I remember being horrified that you could have something removed, not knowing what a spleen was. The doctors then struggled to stop the bleeding after the operation and shortly afterwards, I cannot be absolutely certain about this as I only have a very vague memory, but I think because they could not stop the bleeding they then rushed him from Gloucester Royal Infirmary to Bristol Royal Infirmary. At this point my father had already been given Factor VIII, but we were told that Bristol was a much better hospital with newer facilities and they would be able to help him.
10. We received a telephone call from the hospital, which my Father's brother, Uncle David, took as he was staying with us at the time because things were not looking good for my father. They informed David that they were taking my father to Bristol and that we should get there as quickly as we could. David then drove my mother to the hospital in Bristol. At that stage the hospital tried various things to stop the bleeding, including a direct blood transfusion from [GRO-C] [GRO-C]. I have recently contacted [GRO-C] and asked if he could recall this time. All he can remember is that he was hooked up directly to my father and blood was taken out of him, and put straight into my father. My father's blood was then cleansed and then went into [GRO-C]. He felt very sick at the time, and was a bit concerned about the impact that this procedure may have on his own health. However, the hospital were desperate to find someone who was of the same blood type as my Father, and coincidentally, they were a match.
11. I do recall, during the last month or so of his life, that the doctors treating my father were saying *"we've never seen this before, we're just trying different things"*. They used terms like *"while there's life there's hope"*. I think they were just clutching at straws, but they were trying different things to see if they would help. My father passed away on 22 May 1975. A copy of his death certificate

can be found at WITN3735002 which notes his cause of death as hypoxaemia, pulmonary haemorrhage and thrombocytopenia.

12. These things happened a long time ago and my memory is not clear. However, I do recall my mother being very concerned about how Hepatitis had been diagnosed and that the only explanation of how he had contracted it was through transfusions that he had received. The doctors also gave my father steroids and he puffed up, in those days' steroids made you put on weight. He also started to turn a slight yellowy colour. I recall the doctors at Bristol Royal Infirmary talking about platelets and that my father had a low platelet count. I remember them saying that my father was not making enough of one particular type, I cannot recall exactly, I believe it might have been white platelets, but I cannot be one hundred percent sure. I think this is what ultimately caused his demise and I think at the time they just did not know how to treat it. Unfortunately, as my father passed away in 1975 his medical records have been destroyed.

13. I am not aware that my mother was tested for hepatitis, but her medical records may show something.

Section 3: Other Infections

14. I am not aware of any other infections that my father may have had.

Section 4: Consent

15. I do not know if my father was ever treated or tested without his knowledge. I do vaguely recall something about there being a shortage of blood at the time and that there was a supply of plasma that would effectively give him a lifeline and I would imagine that my parents would have given permission to receive it.

Section 5: Impact

16. My parents married in the mid to late 1950's.

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There was

therefore a bit of tension on my father's side of the family.

17. My father was a sales manager for Smiths Industries Aviation Department. Smiths produced all the instrumentation that went into things like jumbo jets and Concorde. My mother worked part time as a telephonist at Gloucester Telephone Exchange. My parents had had a daughter before I was born who was stillborn. I know that after I was born my mother did get pregnant again, but lost the baby at an early stage.

18. Smiths Industries were pretty good to my father. My father had a pension with them and he also had a life insurance policy, however, I am not sure if that was with Smiths or something he took out separately. When my father died the mortgage was pretty much paid off on the house, at least a chunk of it was paid off. My mother then carried on working at the telephone exchange in the evenings and she also received a widow's pension from Smiths Industries. We did not have a huge amount of money and money was quite tight every week.

19. When my father died my mother fell to pieces. She did not have many people to turn to for support. I therefore had to step up and started managing the household money, keeping the house in good condition. I was doing things around the house that my father would have done.

20. The impact on my mother had a long lasting effect on her. Around a year after my father had died my mother then met a man through a friend, a colleague of my mother's, who lived a couple of roads away from us. His name is Ken and at the time he lived in Essex. It was a whirlwind romance and when Ken proposed to my mother I remember my mother coming to tell me and she said "look, we're

going to stay here, Ken's going to move in with us. He's going to move away from his home in Essex, come and live with us". I do wonder if part of the reason my mother remarried so quickly was because she felt I needed a father figure.

21. Ken was self-employed as a builder and he planned to start his building business in Gloucester and it was hoped that that would take off. He was already well established where he lived and so he thought it would be easy to start again. Unfortunately, in around 1976/77 the country went into recession and the business did not take off as Ken had hoped and he then got a job in the prison service as a prison officer. Shortly after joining the service Ken was then posted back to Essex. I believe that Ken had been offered the choice of three places, one being Essex, which is the one that my mother and Ken decided upon. This was unfortunate timing as this was about two months before I was due to take my GCE exams.
22. It was decided that I would stay in Gloucester to take my exams. My mother had agonised about what to do, whether she should stay with me, but if she had stayed with me then she and Ken would have had to keep the house. The idea was that they would sell the house and buy a new house in Essex. With my total agreement, my mother and stepfather moved to Essex and I stayed with her colleague, who was more like an auntie, through marriage. I stayed with her for around three months. My mother was wracked with guilt over it, she had not liked the idea of leaving me, but I wanted my mother to be happy and this seemed to be the right thing to do.
23. All of this took its toll on my mother and in about 1977, just two years after my father had died, she had the first of a series of strokes and lost the use of her left foot and left arm and she was severely weakened and she also had problems in her left eye. This was about a month after moving away. I had spoken to my mother every night after they had moved, but all of a sudden there were no telephone calls and it turned out she was in hospital. My stepfather was with her at the hospital and so was not able to telephone me. It took a day or so to find

out that she was ill and at that point I was in the middle of my GCEs and I had to wait a couple of weeks before I could go to Chelmsford to see her. She returned home after about four weeks in hospital. My mother was left severely weakened down her left side, her foot and arm on her left side did not have much strength and she could not see very well out of her left eye. My mother was 42 years old when this happened.

24. My mother had a couple more strokes over the years and she died peacefully in her bed asleep about five years ago. She was 80 years' old which was a pretty good age, it was quite sad to see her decline because the impact of the strokes.
25. I look back now and all those things that happened over a two-year space it is no wonder she had a stroke. My mother had a lot to contend with back then. I was 13 years old and I was no angel and I do not think I was the easiest child to look after. Due to the impact of my father's death on my mother, she was not able to cope with running the finances of the household or keeping the house in the condition it needed to be kept in and so I did that, which at the time was an adventure for me. As a consequence, I grew up pretty quickly. My mother recovered and she then got everything back on track and she then married again. My stepfather is still alive today and he has just turned 85 years old. He is a great man and my mother was very lucky to meet him. When they first got together it had introduced stress because, after two years of me being the man of the house, all of a sudden there was another man around which created some tension between us, so that would not have helped the situation.
26. My father's death impacted me in a number of ways. My grandparents were GRO-C and so when my father died they took control. My father died at 11am on 22 May and by 11pm on the same day he was buried. I was not allowed to see him. I am not sure if I would have wanted to see him at that age. I also was not allowed to go to the funeral. At the time that was okay, but it impacted me later

in terms of taking control of certain things in the house because my mother could not.

27. My school work definitely suffered. I had been very fortunate and had passed what was then the 11 plus and I got into a very good school in Gloucester where my peers were going to be bankers and lawyers. I did not really have much in the way of career guidance because I did not have a father. I had wanted to drive lorries and here I was going to this school where you could do a lot more than that. And I really did not apply myself particularly well after my father died and I left school with three GCE O levels. I could have done a lot better.
28. I went off the rails a little bit and my father's death had longer lasting effects than I gave it credit for. I did get into trouble at school which perhaps I may not have done had my father been around. I left grammar school still not knowing what I wanted to do and without any direction. I believe that my mother remarrying and my stepfather taking the place of my father caused me to marry very early myself. I got married before I was 21 years old and then we divorced before I was 40 years old. I have since married again, which is very different to my first marriage, and I think the loss of my father turned a few things upside down for a while. It was not until I met my second wife that I realised I had bottled up a lot of my emotions from when my father had died. Not being able to go to the funeral, the sadness of the whole thing, why has my father been taken away? All of these things I had effectively just put it in a box in a corner somewhere in my head, until I got to about 39 years old.
29. I had had a pretty normal social life before my father died. I became more introvert after he died and I definitely had a smaller circle of friends. I think part of that was not knowing quite how to socialise and not wanting my friends to feel sorry for me which made me close things down. It was quite noticeable with my friends at school. Prior to my father dying I had a lot of friends around where we lived, but I lost those too.

30. During the evenings my mother would start work at 6pm. She had varying shifts and her shorter shift was 6pm to 9pm. Most of her shifts were 6pm to 10.30pm or 11pm. I would come home from school and dinner would be on the table and then my mother would leave at around 5.30pm for work. I was then left at home on my own. There was no compulsion for me, as you normally have as a child, to then go out and play with my mates. Looking back, I think there was no need for me to have been like that, but it was just the way it was.
31. Even though both of my parents are now dead, and I was very close to my mother, it is still my father I think of as being the one that is unjustly not here. There had been the financial impacts and we no longer had the standard of living that we had when my father was alive, however, that had only been for a short period of time because my mother remarried.
32. My stepfather is a great guy. I am no different to many other children and I get on better with my stepfather from a distance and we get on well now. He lives on his own now my mother has died and he is like a second father to me. I worry about him and I care for him and, especially at the moment, I telephone him regularly to make sure he is okay with the Covid situation.
33. The experience I went through made me a little bit more insecure and also made me a little bit tougher, which is possibly a good thing, but it was a hard lesson to learn at the time.
34. I have never been tested for haemophilia as far as I am aware and have no symptoms. However, my father being a haemophiliac must have had some deep rooted impact on me because I remember reaching 42 years of age and feeling that a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders. It was as though I had been waiting for the same thing to happen to me when I was 42.

Section 6: Treatment/Care/Support

35. There was no counselling or support offered and I do not believe that those sort of things were around at the time.

Section 7: Financial Assistance

36. When my father passed away there were no trusts or funds available to assist my mother.
37. On the night that my father was buried my mother and I went to Wales to stay with my mother's relatives. We were there for two or three days and then drove home. We pretty much carried on then. It was not as if nothing had happened, but life then had to get back to normal. I recall meetings with insurance companies in Cheltenham, I can remember a meeting with Smiths Industries, my father's employer, however, there were no trusts or bodies that we could go to for any emotional or financial support. Not that we were aware of.

Section 8: Other Issues

38. I was a little reluctant to come forward to provide evidence to the Inquiry. I have no documentary evidence that my father was infected with Hepatitis or HIV, but this is my belief. When I have heard the stories in relation to the treatments that people received it sounded so similar to my father's treatment and for a long time I did wonder if I should say something.
39. My reason for providing evidence is that, if my father did die because of being infected with Hepatitis or HIV, I want that known. If there is a possibility, then I would like it on record. My father received Factor VIII very early on and the doctors could not work out what was wrong with him. I would like some sort of closure to what happened to my father.
40. I would like to know one way or another if this really is what happened to him or not so at least there is a degree of closure. I have come to terms with it, maybe

later than I should have, but I have come to terms with it in my own way but it is still just something I would like to know.

41. I do not wish to provide my evidence anonymously.

42. I would be willing to provide oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Mark Sutton Gilbert

Dated.....

13/3/2021