

Witness Name: Suzanne Bindon

Statement No: WITN3900001

Exhibits: WITN3900002-006

Dated: 12 March 2020

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SUZANNE BINDON**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2019.

I, Suzanne Bindon, will say as follows: -

#### **Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is Suzanne Bindon. My date of birth is GRO-C 1955 and my address is GRO-C Cardiff, GRO-C.
2. I am not legally represented. I have made this statement with the assistance of the Inquiry investigators.
3. I have lived in Cardiff all my life and for the last 22 or 23 years, I have work for the children services at Cardiff Country Council, as a residential care officer. I am due to retire when I am 66 but I do not know whether I will retire, I might but I might not.

4. I have three sons; Kevin, Martin and Ashley. Kevin was born in 1973, Martin was born in 1976 and Ashley was born in 1983. My youngest Ashley, has since passed away.
5. I have got 7 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren, of which the latter are GRO-C-old twins. It is lovely as every other weekend I have off work and so we have lunch here.
6. I have an older brother, called Colin. Colin was born on GRO-C 1952 and so is 67 years old. He is retired but used to work in the aluminium business, making doors. He did that for 25/30 years.
7. Colin married in 1976 and has three children called Steve, Amanda and Colin. He has 5 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren. Sadly, his wife passed away in 2018 and he is still coming to terms with his loss. I have asked Colin to assist me with this interview, as his memory is better for dates.
8. I intend to speak about my father, John Edward Peach and his infection with Hepatitis C. In particular, the nature of his illness, how the illness affected him and the impact it had on him, our family, and myself.

## **Section 2. How Infected**

9. Dad was a mild haemophiliac and I remember him occasionally going back and forth to the hospital. He had mild haemophilia but he needed to go to hospital for bad knocks.
10. I do not know how he was infected with hepatitis C and I really do not know how and when he knew he had this infection. He always kept things to himself and he never told me about this. However, at the time of his death I did know he had hepatitis C.

11. The first I knew he had a problem was when the Skipton Fund application all came out. The hospital had told him to contact the Skipton fund and this is when I first knew he had hepatitis C, as before that I was clueless. So was the rest of the family.

12. I was at his flat, picking him up to go somewhere and I think he said he had a letter or a phone call and he needed to get in touch with Skipton because of infected or contaminated blood. But he didn't tell me when he was given the hepatitis or any other details. I just sort of said, Ok. I didn't know the potential damage that it could cause or anything about hepatitis C.

13. I will request my father's medical records from the haemophilia centre and his GP so that we can get a better idea of how and when he was infected with hepatitis C, that's if they still exist after this length of time.

### **Section 3. Other Infections**

14. I am not aware of any other infections that my father was given as a result of his treatment for haemophilia. As far as I am aware, HIV never affected him.

### **Section 4. Consent**

15. He consented to all his treatment and this was never an issue.

### **Section 5. Impact**

16. Dad was born on GRO-C 1924 and was married to my mother, Elizabeth Peach. Colin remembers that even though everyone thought that mum's name was Elizabeth, it was actually Bessie Burrows, as this is what it says on his birth certificate.

17. I remember when I was growing up, dad worked for betting offices, collecting the clocks to see if they had been fiddled and he also worked for the Rover company in the factory production line. Colin also worked in the factory but this closed in 1975. Dad worked in the paper factory before that. He never told his employers about the haemophilia, he was fearful of being sacked if they knew. Times were very different back then.
18. One impact on dad due to his haemophilia was that he couldn't go into the Army, as they wouldn't accept him. His two brothers did but he wasn't allowed to. He was always disappointed that he couldn't do this.
19. The way he always put it over was that he was only mild. He always emphasised that. I don't think he ever told anyone about the haemophilia and so he did not suffer any stigma that was associated with it. This also applied when the AIDS adverts were being televised back in the 1980's. He was a very private man and did not discuss the haemophilia with anyone; therefore there was only a select people who knew. It certainly didn't stop him living his life; he was a very active man.
20. Dad was very matter of fact and he never complained and just got on with it. He never complained of any issues, pain or symptoms and as I said, he was very active throughout the majority of his life, he did slow down 12 months before he died, I will speak about that later.
21. For 19 years, Colin played football for the Rover Company and so every Saturday he would play and dad was the treasurer. Dad would go with Colin every Saturday and he never mentioned anything to Colin at all. He also did shopping for the old ladies and would walk everywhere.
22. My mother and father were divorced but they did have contact afterwards, as they would always be here, either cutting the lawn or

doing other things. They divorced when Colin was in the army in Germany. Colin remembers coming home from leave and dad said that they are getting a divorce. Colin just said you have to do what you need to do. Colin was in the army from 1969 – 1973.

23. They divorced when I had already had Kevin and he was born in 1973 so it must have been after this date. I got married when I was 19 and I moved out and got a flat and they got divorced soon after I had moved out.

24. My mother said that they were just waiting for me to move out before they did it. They did not carry on seeing each other in a romantic way after they split. He gave up the house and got a flat in GRO-C. Mum died of a heart attack before dad died. Dad did not go on to have any other relationships.

25. Myself, GRO-C were all carriers of haemophilia. Not only did my dad have haemophilia but also GRO-C GRO-C. I only found out dad had haemophilia when I was expecting my first child and this is when I found out that I was a carrier. I have no symptoms at all.

26. I had no knowledge I was a carrier until I was expecting my first. Once I found out I was pregnant, Dad said that he was a haemophiliac and he said I needed to get tested. I fell pregnant not knowing I could be a carrier. It was only during the pregnancy that my father said I needed to go and get checked.

27. It was a shock finding out I was a carrier, as I didn't know anything about my dad's illness, as it was never talked about. We assumed there was nothing wrong as he was so active and would do everything with us.

28. He kept the haemophilia to himself because he had to keep it from his employers. I remember he always worked and one time he had two jobs. I had no knowledge of the haemophilia until I fell pregnant.

29. My partner didn't say a lot when he found out. It was just we had to wait and see and get tested. I found that it is just the shock of it all. I read about haemophilia and I saw how serious it could be. This worried me as I did not want my children to suffer either with haemophilia or as a girl, be a carrier.

30. I actually found that Professor Bloom was fine. He was a small man and he was lovely. They were right on the ball, GRO-C  
GRO-C Bloom was always lovely to my father as well. When my father passed away I donated money to the centre as they were amazing. He always sung their praises.

31. I was probably tested at the Heath Hospital. I can remember having a meeting with Professor Bloom after the results were confirmed. He said normally when he had a female who was diagnosed as a 'carrier' he would explain to them that they might pass the haemophilia on and would give them the option to terminate the pregnancy.

32. I can't remember how far along I was when we had this meeting but, in this case, he said as your father is mild, I am not going to advise you to do that and so I didn't. I believe that Bloom usually discussed about terminations because of the effects that haemophilia can have on a person's quality of life.

33. GRO-C  
GRO-C my youngest, Ashley was found to be a haemophiliac.

34. Ashley was a mild haemophiliac and I believe he was never treated with Factor VIII but he did have a green card. He was born in 1983 and he passed away on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016. His death was unrelated to the haemophilia.
35. He worked on the railway and there was an accident one day early in the morning. I can remember Ashley was really concerned, as then he had to tell the hospital. He was concerned that the doctor would write in his notes about the haemophilia and he didn't want this. Ashley hadn't told his employer either and he would have lost his job if they found out.
36. Ashley couldn't go to the dentist to have teeth removed. As a child he had to go to hospital to have this done, as normal dentists wouldn't entertain him. Also, if he went on holiday he had to make sure there was a hospital nearby.
37. The school knew about Ashley's haemophilia and were fine but he couldn't play sports at school. They needed the knowledge as he was sporty but it did hold him back that way.
38. He did get treatment once or twice. The first time ever when he went to the dentist and had a tooth out and he wouldn't stop bleeding, so I took him to hospital. He was given 'a syrup' but I do not know what this was. And from then on, he didn't go to a dentist. This used to really infuriate him but it was the condition he had.
39. He was not infected with anything because it was a syrup they gave him. He used to get nosebleeds and I would buy him iron tablets and iron brew. We managed it with Ashley but he would never tell his employers.
40. I knew Dad was not well from about 2004 and so I was looking after him after this period. At the time I found out about the hepatitis, I didn't

know what to say and I didn't understand what the potential consequences were then.

41. Dad was relaxed and the way he reacted didn't cause me concern. I don't know if he didn't understand the consequences of hepatitis either. Colin was never told about the hepatitis C.

42. I didn't know much about the haemophilia, hepatitis or liver problems but I was very angry when I found out. I was angry at Professor Bloom because he knew and he never told me. Dad had nothing but high regard for all of them at the haemophilia centre and he would never have a bad word to say against them.

43. Colin states: We cannot be the only ones and there must be 100's of patients under Dr Bloom in Wales. I don't know if I am angry at Dr Bloom as my father never was. He never vented his anger towards Bloom at all. I was angry at first because it was my father but what can you do. The damage had been done by then.

44. Colin and dad used to go to the British Legion. Every Friday Colin would take him and they would play darts. He would have 2 pints and Colin would have 4 and then they would walk home. Dad really wasn't a big drinker. In the end, he didn't want to go to the Legion and he started closing down.

45. I know my father and he was active. It was only a year before he died that he started to go downhill and he slowed down. Colin and dad would walk and he would be by the side of Colin all the way. He was 79/80 by this time but then he had this very rapid decline in health.

46. I remember we had snow one year and dad used to go shopping for the old ladies, such as Edwina. He had been to Edwina's and then was going to the shops. I called and said that he shouldn't go out. It was



during this trip that he had a fall and this was the start of his downfall. This was a few years before he died.

47. Looking back this was the start of it. This is when he starting closing down and he became more cautious. This would have been the early 2000's. I tried to look and see what caused him to close down and I think it was this fall.

48. Colin remembers he was once on the bus going past and he saw my father walking and he was hunched over. It was only in the last year that he went downhill so fast. For a good while, I used to drive dad everywhere as his walking was terrible.

49. I used to take him away for trips in Wales and in the end, he wouldn't come. We got a wheelchair so we could take him out but he didn't want to sit in it. Although, we persuaded him to use it and then he thought it was the best thing since sliced bread.

50. Then he got to the stage where he wouldn't go out at all and it was as if he was giving up. It started off that he wouldn't get on a bus and then he wouldn't go to the shops, so I used to take him food and prepare his meals.

51. It was only in the last year that I saw any impact from the liver disease. He just couldn't be bothered to move. Colin remembers that his son came down to visit and this was about a year or 18 months before dad died. He noticed the decline that had occurred, as he had not visited his granddad for a while. He commented that dad seemed very dodderly and didn't seem right.

52. I would take food for him and he would say lovely. Then I would call in before or after work and he would say the food was lovely but I would find it hidden so I know he hadn't eaten it.

53. He has always been slight but he must have lost weight, as he wasn't eating the food. The next day I would take him a Greggs pasty and then I would find it hidden. He would say he couldn't be bothered to eat.
54. He would sit in his flat and not do anything. I would put the telly on so he could watch something but I would go back later and he would be sitting there with it off.
55. He was 82 years old when he died, on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007. I remember I was away on holiday in Gambia at the time. He was very sallow towards the end. I called him on the Wednesday before he died, I said that his grandsons were going to pop in. He told me not to fuss, he sounded fine.
56. Before going on holiday to Gambia, I remember saying to my sons that you need to go check on granddad and thank god they did. My oldest son, Kevin, was trying to ring him and there was no answer.
57. It was the Thursday or Friday and Kevin went over and he couldn't get an answer to the door. Kevin said, gramps I'll take you out in the car and he wouldn't open the door to my son. I'm not sure if he even got a reply.
58. The next day Ashley went down to check on him. However, the neighbour, Sylvia had already called the police as she couldn't get any answer. They were neighbours for a long time and she knew I was away so would also check on him. She also had a key to the flat.
59. When Ashley was going down the hill, he could see the police were outside the flat. The police were given a key from the Sylvia, Dad was found in his bedroom dead. Dad only had a vest and underpants on and he was slumped over on the floor. Ashley later said to the police: don't take my grampy like that...put some clothes on him.

60. They couldn't initially open the door because he was lying in front of it and the police said to Ashley that they couldn't let him in there.
61. Therefore, Ashley phoned his older brother, who came down. My oldest took charge and dealt with the police.
62. Ashley took it hard when he saw his dead grandfather, he was absolutely distraught. I do often think about the effect that this must have had on Ashley. Kevin was the one that had to take the lead. He had to do everything and he did fantastic.
63. Prior to dad's death he wouldn't have a carer and he wouldn't have people come in to his flat. In the end he wasn't showering, as he would say, I will do it later.
64. I was told the news of dad passing over the phone but I couldn't get home from Gambia. The next flight back was on the Monday and I had a flight for the Tuesday anyway and so I just came back on the flight I already had booked.
65. It was weeks before the funeral because it was Easter and I couldn't go see him. He was at the undertakers for a long time and they wouldn't let me see him. The undertakers name was James Summers.
66. I wasn't here when he died and I wasn't allowed to say goodbye. I was thinking that I shouldn't have gone on holiday and I wondered what he was thinking when he died and there were a lot of unanswered questions.
67. I remember for the funeral we were out the back and they wouldn't put my father's suit on him. One of the undertakers came to see me and said it had to be a closed coffin. They wouldn't put his suit on him due to the hepatitis.

68. If they had let me dress him then I would have done it. I had his suit cleaned but all they said was that they could lay it on top of him. They said they couldn't do it due to health and safety.

69. I remember speaking to the hospital about the issue with the suit. When I spoke to Dr Dasani, from the haemophilia centre, he was annoyed and I clearly remember this.

70. There must have been a post-mortem as he died at home. Dad was cremated on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2007. The inquest was in October 2007.

71. His death certificate states that the cause of death was: 1a. Cirrhosis of the liver in a man with haemophilia A and hepatitis C and cardiac amyloid (**WITN3900002**).

72. Colin states that even though the death certificate said he had cirrhosis, he was not a big drinker. He would only have a few pints and to me they were trying to dodge a bullet by not putting about contaminated blood on the death certificate.

## **Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support**

73. In an application to the Skipton Fund, it states that dad was given Factor IX and plasma (**WITN3900003**). However, I do not remember what treatment he was given for his haemophilia.

74. Colin can remember one situation where dad was in hospital for 6 weeks, due to a knock on his right leg. He had a knock on his calf and this filled with blood one or two days later.

75. This was during 1976, as Colin got married this year and my father wasn't able to attend because he was in hospital. It was the June. I remember Colin was getting married and went to see him.
76. The knock happened whilst dad was playing football and he would have been about 52 years old at the time. He was out the back playing with Kevin and hit his leg. It wasn't until a day or two later that it swelled up and he had to go to the Heath Hospital for treatment.
77. I am not aware of what treatment he was given but he was kept in hospital for a long time. Colin remembers he was allowed to go swimming in the hospital and this was great because it was a boiling hot summer. Dad always said that they were great people in the haematology department.
78. He said he was ok but he was concerned about a young boy in the next bed. He said he had it mild compared to other people. I didn't know anything about it but he said this boy next to him in hospital was in his 20's and if he got out of bed, then the slightest knock and he would have to go back to bed.
79. When you go into places like this you can see how bad it could have been. There are serious cases of haemophilia. My father thought he was lucky he had it mild.
80. I don't know this for sure but I have a feeling this is was when he was given the contaminated blood, when he went to hospital in 1976. When he came out of the hospital, he just got back on with his life. I think he and Mum had just separated. After the hospital, he seemed fine and there were no outward effects.
81. I was not aware if he was refused treatment at any point due to his haemophilia or hepatitis. It was only ever if he went to the dentist, he had to go to the University Hospital of Wales, known as the Heath

Hospital, to the dental department instead. I know that he also went to the Heath for Factor concentrate and they were lovely and marvellous.

82. As far as we know, he never received any treatment for his hepatitis C. I am not aware if he was given any information concerning hepatitis C. He never mentioned it.

83. We have never been offered or received any counselling, in regards to my dad's illness and or death.

### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

84. I think Prof Bloom or Dr. Dasani (from The Arthur Bloom Haemophilia Centre) got dad in touch with the Skipton fund. He received an initial pay-out of £20,000 in 2004 and then he got another payment of £25,000. He never ever got any kind of monthly sum.

85. In the application for the first payment, dated 20<sup>th</sup> October 2004, it details some of the investigations that dad had (**WITN3900004**). It states that on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1997, he had an ultrasound of his abdomen, which showed he had a large liver and spleen. I was not aware of this test ever being done in 1997.

86. The letter goes on to state, that he has not had any liver biopsy or endoscopy investigation. In the clinical investigation section, it states that dad is a mild haemophiliac with chronic hepatitis and chronic liver disease. It also mentions that there is no doubt that this man is cirrhotic.

87. The application for the second payment was put in but there is some discrepancy on the paper documents as to when this second payment was made. It's quite confusing.

88. One letter states dad received the payment in 2007 and another states I received it in 2011, which would be four years after his death (WITN3900005-6).

89. I am sure that he was alive when he was paid the second payment of £25,000. At the time, Colin did not realise that he had been given two payments and so he cannot help with my memory.

90. If the inquiry deems it necessary to understand the exact facts with regards to when the payments were made, I give my permission for them to contact the Wales Infected Blood Support Scheme (WIBSS).

91. From the first payment, I had £5000 and Colin had £5000. Dad said to me to sort it out and so the first payment was split between the family. The second payment came to me, as Dad told me to have it because he didn't want it. I had the money because I was looking after him.

## **Section 8. Other Issues**

92. I don't know really what I want the inquiry to achieve. I want it to be recognised what has been done. My father should be recognised. He was a good man and he has done no wrong. He had no tattoos or piercings. He led a very normal life.

93. I don't know if people should be blamed. You expect the health officials to know what they are doing and know what to do. You expect them to know how people should be treated and what people should be given. It is mind boggling that this has happened.

94. Whatever were they thinking? The ministers should have known what was happening, as it was their job to know. I don't think you will ever find out really but we want answers.

95. Colin remembers that Professor Bloom was on a programme that he saw and Bloom said he didn't know anything about the contaminated blood but I know he did know. Colin thinks that Bloom got his father in touch with the Skipton fund and so he must have known.

96. All these people were innocent and you put your life in their hands. I don't want people to go to prison as that will not help, that would be pointless but I do want answers. We will never know if dad's life was cut short due to the damage to his liver. It's not knowing which is the hardest.

#### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 12-3-2020