

Witness Name: Alan Claxton

Statement No: WITN4816001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: 15 / 02 / 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ALAN CLAXTON

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 29 January 2021.

I, Alan Claxton, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Alan Claxton and my date of birth is 1943. I live in Sussex and my address is known to the Inquiry.
2. I used to work as a chartered land surveyor. I retired about 2 years ago, due mainly to mobility problems which developed as a result of my car accident.

Section 2. How Infected

3. I was 26 when I had the accident. It was Friday 7th November 1969. I went under the rear wheels of an HGV. I lost a kidney, broke both legs and an arm.

4. I know the road I was travelling on. It was a three-lane road, and the centre lane was overtaking traffic in both directions. A lorry driver was looking across the bend, and he couldn't see me. He started to overtake a car, which fortunately had a doctor in it. I don't remember any of it. Apparently I missed the front of the lorry and hit the back. The passenger, who was reading a book, was not even aware of what had happened.
5. I was admitted to A+E at Battle Hospital in Reading. I was conscious but obviously suffering from pain so it's a bit of a blur. There was a red and orange glow. I was saying I had broken my leg.
6. I woke up in the Intensive Care Unit about 3 days later. My father and my father-in-law were there. They were just blurry heads and shoulders. I was completely out of it. I was on Pethidine for pain relief.
7. I was in intensive care for about 10 days. My friends brought me cigarettes. But I had a look at the bandage and I could see a horrible wide gash. I thought, "if I start smoking it could do some damage." This was all at Battle Hospital.
8. I had multiple operations. They put both of my legs and my right arm into plaster and said, "we will sort them out if you survive your internal injuries."
9. I was seen to by Mr Latta about the internal stuff. For example, my kidney which had fallen off on impact. I also had a punctured lung and a lacerated liver. That was the extent of the internal stuff.
10. About 3 days later they said, "right we'll sort the rest of you out." I went to theatre numerous times. I had an operation on my chest and stomach, and then my legs. My right leg was in traction. The other leg was in plaster. My right arm was in full plaster. I remained like that for over 5 months, in a hospital bed.
11. I had multiple blood transfusions, I'm not sure how many.

12. I can't really remember when I got the Hepatitis. I know I became ill after a couple of months, whilst still in Battle Hospital. It manifested itself by me vomiting everything. I couldn't keep anything down me at all. They put me on daily injections to ease that problem, as well as a low-fat diet. In those days, that meant I had whatever everyone else had but without the fat. So for example; cornflakes without milk, toast without butter, and chicken instead of other meat.
13. When I was visited by the consultants and the staff, they would withdraw from my hearing (they thought) while discussing Hepatitis. I was told I had a liver problem.
14. I did hear a nurse saying, "he's gone through all those operations, and with all that trauma, it would be a shame if he died from this."
15. I just got on. I didn't think much of it. These day's people are more aware of Hepatitis and HIV, but in those days they were just illnesses. I just thought it would go away, I never thought it would impact me in the future or anything.
16. I was in Battle Hospital for nearly 6 months. The illness occurred in roughly the 3rd month. They used the word Hepatitis. I was aware that Hepatitis was a liver problem, but not that it was caused by a transfusion or anything like that. To me it was just something you caught, not something you could have inflicted upon you through treatment. It never crossed my mind.
17. I wasn't given any information from anybody really. I just had blood tests and I was told I had an infection. Nobody told me how to manage the infection.
18. They never referred to it as Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, or "non A non B", at least not that I can remember. It was just the word Hepatitis.
19. The only thing that was out of the ordinary if you like, regarding the infection, is that I was asked if I minded student doctors coming to quiz me about my symptoms. There were two or three occasions when 4-6 young doctors would come along and ask me questions about the infection.

20. I didn't think anything of it. I don't remember the questions. I just thought it was a normal part of medical care - for student doctors to learn about illnesses.
21. Eventually I got released from my hospital bed. Nobody told me my legs would seize up. When I got up, blood shot through my legs which was excruciatingly painful - more painful than anything else I had been through.
22. I went to a rehabilitation centre near Stoke Poges in Buckinghamshire. It was a converted mansion. I spent 6 months there until I was fit and able to return to work which I did in January 1971.
23. I never had any other transfusions outside of Battle Hospital. I don't have any tattoos or piercings. I never had any big army injuries, except for a hockey stick across the face. My nose broke and I was meant to have it manipulated back into place. But before that happened, it went back into place on its own.

Section 3. Other Infections

24. I am not aware of any other infections.

Section 4. Consent

25. I wasn't warned about the blood transfusions. I was in no fit state to give any consent anyway.
26. I don't remember any of it. I was told, "you're going to have an operation," and that was that.
27. The ICU was at the other end of the Geriatric Ward. The only thing I can recollect is someone saying, "he's in the army so he's swearing like a trooper." I don't remember any of it. When I woke up, I was saying "I haven't passed any urine." But I hadn't realised I had a catheter.

Section 5. Impact

28. When I left hospital I was never ill or anything. I was completely over it. I had gotten ill, but then I recovered and I carried on.
29. There wasn't an emotional or mental impact. The accident affected me but that is separate.
30. It didn't mean anything to me, other than the fact that I had had a liver infection basically.
31. I do have Osteoarthritis, as well as an issue called Fat Pad Atrophy in the ball of my foot. That led to my retirement. It got to the point when I could only go to work for 3 or 4 hours a day, and I said to myself, "well I'm 75." I had to call it quits. But I have never had liver issues later in life, no, nothing like that at all.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

32. There wasn't any medication for the infection. I was given injections to stop me being sick. But I can't remember getting injections as a course of treatment. I wasn't told that it was for Hepatitis or anything. I wasn't given any Hepatitis treatment that I am aware of.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

33. I only found out that the Hepatitis was cleared because of my contact with the Skipton Fund. They asked me to have a blood test specifically for that, and it came back negative. That was in 2007. At that stage I was negative and the doctor said he couldn't comment on it.
34. As a result, the Skipton Fund refused my application, because there was no confirmation that I was infected beyond the acute phase (i.e. the first six months).

35. The Skipton Fund asked me if I could get hold of my hospital records. I called Battle Hospital but I was told it had closed down a year before. They said that everything had been moved to Royal Berkshire Hospital.

36. I phoned Royal Berkshire Hospital and first they said, "it appears we do have some records but you have to write in for them." So I wrote them a letter. I didn't hear back for a fortnight. Then I got a handwritten response on what seemed to be torn notebook paper, there was no letterhead or anything. It said, "we couldn't find anything after all."

37. They had no records pre-dating 40 years. I asked them why they had said they did have something. They didn't have any response to that.

38. I know that in my GP records (which are about an inch thick) there are some notes regarding my stay in Battle Hospital, and what I suffered. But I don't know whether there are notes about the liver problem.

39. I was not aware of EIBSS but the investigator has informed me.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed _____

GRO-C

Dated _____

18/02/2021