

Witness Name: Geoff Davies

Statement No.: WITN4859001

Exhibits: **WITN4859002 - 005**

Dated: 11 March 2021

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GEOFF DAVIES**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 12 February 2021.

I, Geoff Duke Davies, will say as follows: -

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

1. My name is Geoff Davies. My date of birth is GRO-C 1957 and my address is GRO-C I am a retired mechanical engineer. I live with my partner, having been together for over 25 years. I have 5 children, one adopted, from my two previous marriages and I have 17 grandchildren.
2. I intend to speak about my infection with hepatitis C ('HCV'). In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on me, my family and our lives together.

## **Section 2. How Infected**

3. I grew up in and around Wallasey, Merseyside. My childhood was disrupted by my parents' divorce when I was three years old and I spent some time, on and off, in care. I don't remember this time very well, though I remember being picked up from school and being taken to different people's houses, while my Dad was still at work.
4. When I was aged 12 or 13, around 1970, I went to the Royal Navy careers office in Liverpool. Even though I was too young to join, they let me sit the tests. They then said they would be in touch.
5. Sometime after this I had appendicitis and had an appendectomy at Victoria Central Hospital, Wallasey, around 1970/71. I had a number of complications. I spent three weeks in Victoria Central Hospital after the operation. I remember the stitches around my stomach had burst and it became infected. I remained in Victoria Central for three weeks before I was transferred to Leasowe Hospital, I was told, 'to convalesce'. I can remember being fitted with a drip during this time but I cannot remember what it was. I was released from Leasowe Hospital after 3 or 4 weeks and everything was fine. Incidentally, I had tonsils removed at Victoria Central Hospital two years previously. I mention these procedures because I do not know if I received any blood or blood products during these times.
6. For secondary school, I attended Wirral Grammar School. One day when I was aged 15, two military policemen came and picked me up from the school. They had spoken to the headmaster and explained that I was to be taken out of school to spend some time with my family before I joined the Royal Navy later that year. I then spent 6 months living with my father and sister before I finally joined up on 07 November 1972.
7. I spent 5 thoroughly enjoyable and productive years in the Royal Navy. However, in 1977, I was involved in a very serious road traffic accident while on leave. I was riding a motorcycle with my then-girlfriend on the

back when the rear tyre blew out. I looked at the oncoming concrete lamp post and realised that I had just filled up the tank and knew that if I crashed into it the bike would blow up. However, I didn't see the metal 'no waiting' post about head high. I hit this sign post and my bike sheered it. This ripped through my legs and I was immediately rushed to Victoria Central Hospital. I have enclosed as exhibit **WITN4859002** three photographs, taken yesterday showing the injuries caused to my left leg as they appear now. The girlfriend by the way was thrown clear and landed on some grass. She was relatively fine.

8. After being admitted to Victoria Central Hospital, I was found to have multiple compound fractures to my left tibia and fibula. At the initial assessment in hospital, I can explicitly recall the doctors removing my motorcycle boots and blood pouring everywhere, like a tap. I had bones sticking out both the front and back of my leg and my calf muscle was riddled with big holes in the back from the lacerations of my broken bones.
9. The doctors pushed the bones all back together and then plastered my entire left leg up. I remember being attached to a number of drips. Though I do not recall seeing blood specifically, I am of the opinion that I must have been given blood. I was also given what I believe to be a significant amount of morphine to numb the excruciating pain.
10. Around 3 weeks later, a few days before Christmas 1977, I was sent home by Victoria Central Hospital so they could free up some space in the wards. This was obviously premature, I was still in agony so the hospital prescribed me with a bottle of dihydrocodeine, codeine tablets and Valium to help me to sleep and relax. I feel that they sent me home full of drugs and believe that this all contributed to a lifestyle that I later fell into, which I will go on to explain later in this statement
11. Every day after I was discharged my father took me to **Victoria Central Hospital** as my toes were purple and I was struggling to stand up. Each time I went, the hospital refused to do anything and simply stated that it

would get better. Each week my leg was x-rayed and the bones showed no signs of healing whatsoever.

12. Some months later, I remember my father saying that he was taking me to the hospital and that we were not leaving until they did something meaningful to my leg. I remember being in extreme pain, I couldn't sleep and I was sweating profusely. The bones in my leg were sticking out and stuck against the plaster.
13. When we got to the hospital, the doctors said that it was impossible for the bones to be stuck to the plaster. They said this couldn't happen. They proceeded to take the plaster off, I begged him not to do it the way he was doing it i.e. taking it off in one piece. I wanted him to do it carefully piece by piece. However, he continued and I saw my bones sticking out and I immediately blacked out completely due to the pain and shock. Apparently, I was rushed to theatre. I was kept in an induced coma for 5 days.
14. When I came around 5 days later, it was explained to me that they had pushed the bones in my leg back together and put my leg back in the 2 halves of the original plaster and tied them together with 2 bandages. They said that they had been in touch with a skin graft specialist and I was soon transferred to Leasowe Hospital, Wrral where I would be seen by him.
15. At Leasowe Hospital, the skin graft specialist took me into the theatre to perform a further operation. After this, he said that the first thing Victoria Central Hospital should have done after the road traffic accident was to lie me face down to look at the damage to the calf muscle. The muscle was destroyed by the countless splintered bones and the specialist had removed the majority of my left calf muscle as can be seen in the photographs. This also left me with severe nerve damage throughout my leg and foot. The skin graft specialist had also removed the skin from the back of my right leg and used this to repair the damage to my left leg.

16. After this operation, around 3 or 4 days later, my leg was x-rayed. By this time 6 months had passed since the accident. The x-ray showed for the first time that my bones had started healing. I also remember being attached to multiple bags on either side of my hospital bed. I know that plasma was definitely one of them.
17. I was kept in Leasowe Hospital for at least 6 to 8 weeks. During this time, I remember the nurses having to change the dressings on my leg. I was in such extreme pain when they did this that I had to be pinned down to stop me from moving. I was also fitted with a leg calliper in order to assist me in learning to walk again. This remained fitted for over a year.
18. At some point during my hospital stay, I was approached by someone from the Royal Navy. He asked me to sign discharge papers and I immediately refused. He returned 6 weeks later and, in my view now, coerced me to sign the discharge papers. He said that I would never be allowed to go on a ship again with a leg like mine and that I would be transferred to the navy hospital in Hampshire meaning I would not see my family. After hearing this I decided to sign the discharge papers though I believe I was misled and did so under duress.
19. During my time overseas in Singapore and Hong Kong, I did get tattoos.
20. I loved the navy and I was absolutely devastated at being forced to leave. I had aspirations to become an officer and had dedicated 5 years of my life to service, plus a further 2 years after my accident.
21. I met my first wife whilst I was in Leasowe Hospital. We married soon after, around 1980 or 1981. I formally adopted her 3-month-old son and we had 3 children together. During this period I was becoming dependent on painkiller tablets and I needed Valium every night to get to sleep.
22. Once I left the Royal Navy, I was unemployed and unable to work as a result of my leg injury. I received very little money from my military

invalidity benefit and I couldn't work. I was becoming increasingly stressed and I was struggling to cope with the pressures of life. As a result, [GRO-C] mixing with the wrong people without realising.

23. In 1984, [GRO-C]  
[GRO-C] She went to court to apply to have me kicked out of the family house. The house had been my family home growing up and my name was on the rent book but because she had custody of the children I had to leave in line with a court order.

24. As a result, we divorced in 1985 and I began to spiral deeper and deeper  
[GRO-C] [GRO-C]  
[GRO-C]

25. [GRO-C]

26. [GRO-C]  
[GRO-C] My GP continued to prescribe me over 100 tablets every week even though this should have been every 3 months. [GRO-C]

27. GRO-C

28. GRO-C

29. GRO-C I found a bedsit that was in an area local to where I had been living but far enough away from any of the GRO-C that I had. I lived there for a year until my mother's next door neighbour, who had taken a shine to me, said that I could live with her until I sorted my life out.

30. Throughout this time, in the late 1980s, I would get up every day and walk down to the big oil refinery at the other side of town. I got up at 6am and proceeded to knock on the factory door every morning asking for a job. I did this every day for 6 months until eventually one of the security guards gave me a phone number. I was given an interview and I got a job as a cleaner. After a while, the engineering department found out about my background in the navy and I was taken into a position more appropriate to my skill set.

31. I worked there for 3 or 4 years before I joined Unilever in 1991. I began working as a machinery engineer and worked there for over 20 years until my enforced retirement. When I retired I was in a senior role as a diagnostic engineer, taking care of all the factory production plant.

32. I had always been a regular blood donor since my service in the navy. I remember donating blood at least once a year from about the age of 17.

After donating blood around late 1997 or early 1998, I received a letter from the National Blood Service dated 16 March 1998 (enclosed as exhibit **WITN4859003**).

33. The letter from the National Blood Service (NBS) informed me that, as a result of blood screening, they had found that my blood contained 'evidence of past infection with the Hepatitis C virus'. It said that it would be in my interests to see my GP and I was also asked for contact details on a form and my consent for the NBS to contact my GP. The letter added that I would no longer be able to donate blood and my name would be withdrawn from the donor panel. This letter was signed by Dr A J N Shepherd, Consultant Haematologist.
34. After receiving this letter, I was devastated. I knew roughly what hepatitis was and I was shell-shocked to receive this news. I didn't realise initially how serious HCV is until I looked into it in more detail. I was in a dream world for a few days and couldn't understand it. I was trying to work out how and why it happened. After I settled down, I concluded that it must have been caused by the treatment after my road traffic accident. In which case I would have donated infected blood many times without knowing.
35. After receiving the letter from the National Blood Service I am pretty sure that I went to see my GP straightaway. I can't remember what exactly he said or whether he gave me any information except that I do remember that he said that I should avoid alcohol.
36. I recall receiving a letter with an appointment at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Liverpool soon afterwards. I saw Dr Nye at the Haematology Department where HCV was explained to me in more detail. I was advised how to avoid transmitting the infection to others and I was told to avoid alcohol and fatty foods. I also remember one of the nurses telling me not to share toothbrushes and to clear up any bleeds straightaway.



37. My partner, who I am still with today, was incredibly shocked after hearing about my diagnosis. [REDACTED] GRO-C [REDACTED] GRO-C I decided not to tell any other friends or family as I was too scared about what might happen, as well as worried about losing my job.
38. I informed the medical centre at work. They told me not to worry, and that it would be treated as confidential. They said that I could see them anytime if I ever needed help and if I needed some time off work. They were very supportive.
39. After my diagnosis I had two biopsies, both of which showed that I have a fatty liver. I was told that without treatment I would develop cirrhosis and I would die. Despite this, I was not offered any treatment until 2003, some 5 years after my diagnosis.
40. With reference to my personal diaries, I began treatment on 29 July 2004. I had an appointment to start my treatment at the Linda McCartney Centre, at the Royal Liverpool Hospital where I was given a pack of syringes and a box of tablets. I started a 6 months course of interferon and ribavirin on this day. It was explained to me that I could experience horrendous side-effects, though I thought they were just overplaying it at first. I remember being given the head nurse's emergency contact number to use if I encountered any serious problems.
41. I injected the interferon once every week on a Wednesday and I took 4 or 6 ribavirin tablets 3 or 4 times a day. Within 20 minutes of taking the first interferon it was like being given the flu, only 10 times worse. Every bone and joint in my body felt like it was being crushed. My skin was itching ferociously and went hot and cold. I had a bizarre sensation in my skin and all I wanted to do was rip it off, my skin was so itchy.
42. Within an hour of taking the weekly interferon injection I used to lie down and wouldn't move for 2 or 3 days, sometimes for a week. As a consequence of the ribavirin tablets I couldn't eat properly though

ironically, I had to eat in order to take the tablets. I felt sick and the tablets wrecked my stomach. I had extreme diarrhoea followed by constipation and then diarrhoea again.

43. In many ways the course of treatment affected me mentally even more than it did physically, though I didn't realise this at the time. I thought I was going insane. I would snap at my partner for even the slightest remark and for no apparent reason. I was unable to work throughout the entirety of my treatment, though fortunately I was kept on full pay.

44. During the 6 month course of treatment, I went to The Royal Liverpool every 4 weeks for a check-up and to pick up my medication. Although they asked me how I was, I was not tested and I had no idea if my viral load was declining. All I was told was that the side-effects were indicative of the medication being effective against the HCV. It was explained to me that the interferon attacked the virus whereas the ribavirin stopped it from coming back.

45. I completed the course of interferon and ribavirin treatment in February 2005 and I was told that the HCV was undetectable. Thankfully the treatment was effective, with tests 6 and 12 months later again producing negative tests for HCV. I have enclosed a letter from Dr Millar, Consultant Physician at the Tropical and Infectious Diseases Unit, Royal Liverpool Hospital confirming this (enclosed as exhibit **WITN4859004**).

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

46. I am not aware that I received any other infections as a result of infected blood transfusions.

### **Section 4. Consent**

47. I believe that I consented to being treated and tested for HCV.

### **Section 5. Impact**

48. I now realise that my HCV infection was a cause of many of my health problems. I used to feel sick constantly and I had terrible indigestion problems, both of which persist even now. I have always since had loose bowels which is another recurring problem to this day. I believe HCV was, and is, the cause of these issues.
49. Before I was diagnosed with HCV, I was trying to work 12 hour shifts. It was horrendous and I really struggled, so much so that sometimes I was unable to work. I didn't know what was causing my fatigue and I had no strength whatsoever. If I had the occasional can of beer it would knock me for six, and I had no idea what was affecting me. I once had 2 and a half pints, before my diagnosis, and I ended up in bed for 5 days. I have not touched alcohol since. I now realise that this was caused by my infection with HCV.
50. I was completely devastated when I found out about my infection with HCV. I didn't know anything about it at the time and I instantly thought that I couldn't see any of my kids and grandchildren. I was worried about cutting myself and giving it to them or just the risk that I may somehow pass it on to them so, I decided not to see them anyone. When one of my kids used to phone me, I would make up an excuse and say I was working. The grandkids were confused and used to ask where granddad was. I used to say I was busy – shift work was a good cover; I was only trying to protect them.
51. After 12 months of completing the course of treatment and being told I was clear of HCV, I slowly began to resume seeing my family. I was still very cautious to the extent that if I had to blow my nose I would go out of the room.
52. I lost a lot of years and it has been hard for me to pick up from where I left off. Things have improved but it has not been easy. I still have only told 2 of my 5 children about it. I told my eldest daughter and she was

great and very supportive. Despite telling 2 of my children I have kept this information vague and as low key as possible.

53. My partner of 25 years has been a rock throughout all of my problems. I must have been horrendous to live with during the treatment, yet she put up with all of it without question or complaint.

54. During the course of my treatment I also lost my mother. We had reconciled a few years previously, so it knocked me for six when I went around to her house and found her dead on the sofa. It would've been difficult to deal with, her death and all the things that come with that in normal circumstances but this was compounded massively by the treatment.

55. I remember being outraged at the way I was stigmatised by the medical staff at the Fazakerley Aintree Hospital during my first liver biopsy. I was put in an isolation room that looked like it was built in the Victorian era. I was told by the nurses that I must "stay there, do not come out of the room, food will be brought to you and you must not leave the room". I was petrified and nothing was explained to me. I didn't see anyone for over 5 hours and I got a sandwich for dinner.

56. Inexplicably I was kept in overnight before my liver biopsy. When the biopsy was eventually performed, the following afternoon, it was done manually. They used a huge needle to take a piece of my liver, during which I was not given any anaesthetic. The pain was excruciating and I was in a lot of pain for a while afterwards. I was then discharged. There was minimal communication, no explanation about when the procedure would take place, or what the delays were. I could have turned up on the day, had it done and gone home. Nobody cared to explain anything. I don't know the names of those involved.

57. All the time I was in the Fazakerley Aintree Hospital I was made to feel like a leper. The staff didn't want to come near me and the nurses all wore noticeably more PPE compared to when treating other patients.

This was in complete contrast to my second biopsy when the staff were much more sympathetic. Although I cannot remember where this took place, the biopsy was performed using a computerised machine and I didn't have to stay overnight. The pain was nowhere near as bad. The two experiences were chalk and cheese.

58. I was forced to retire early due to my ill health caused by HCV and the residual effects of the treatment I received. Fortunately, my company made me redundant so I received a lump sum. I retired 10 years ago, at a time then I was earning £50,000 a year in a very good position. I realised that I couldn't cope with working anymore. Since then I have no job and no salary. I have struggled financially and for the last 10 years I have survived on less than £600 a month. I have another 2 years to wait until I receive a state pension.

59. I look back on all these events and think what doesn't destroy you can only make you stronger.

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

60. I have never been offered counselling or psychological support in consequence of my infection with, or treatment for HCV.

61. I had no difficulties in obtaining treatment, including dental treatment. My GP informed my dentist after I was diagnosed with HCV and he continued to treat me with no problems. I believe that I was the last appointment of the day and the nurses were double gloved, but they were all fine with me.

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

62. One of the nurses at The Royal Liverpool Hospital told me about the Skipton Fund. She said that I should apply to the 'new fund' that was set

up. When she did this it was in whispered tones as though as she shouldn't be telling me.

63. I applied to the Skipton Fund on 16 March 2016. I received a letter in reply on 04 April 2016 (enclosed as exhibit **WITN4859005**). In this letter, Nicholas Fish informed that my application was declined due to my **GRO-C** Mr Fish wrote that **GRO-C** is a far greater risk factor for HCV transmission than treatment using NHS blood/blood products prior to September 1991.

64. This letter also refers to the fact that on 24 March 2016 I had spoken to Nicholas Fish and said that I would attempt to obtain medical records in relation to my road traffic accident. Nicholas Fish noted that there was no reference to my road traffic accident in my application and wrote that he had considered that even if he were to receive medical records to confirm a blood transfusion prior to September 1991, 'the application would not be successful due to the more significant risk factors for the transmission of hepatitis C' **GRO-C**

65. I was offered the opportunity to appeal against this decision, but I never chose to do so as I did not see the point.

## **Section 8. Other Issues**

66. My rejection from the Skipton Fund was on the basis of **GRO-C** **GRO-C** being a higher risk factor than infection through NHS blood supplies. I fail to see how this could be the case **GRO-C**  
**GRO-C**

67. It appears to me that my **GRO-C** was used by the Skipton Fund, and by extension the government, as an excuse not to pay me any financial support from the funds set up for that exact purpose.

68. It is my understanding that all medical records from Victoria Central Hospital were transferred on to digital format at the Arrowe Park Hospital after Victoria Central closed down. I was even told that staff were employed there for 5 years to complete this task.

69. I have not applied for my medical records as it is so long ago and I believe they will have been destroyed, simply because of the time that has passed. I therefore have no way of evidencing my treatment after the road traffic accident at Victoria Central Hospital and after that at the Leasowe Hospital.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

11 / 3 / 21

Exhibit	Description
WITN4859002	Photographs of Geoff Davies' left leg showing injuries caused by road traffic accident
WITN4859003	Letter from Dr A J N Shepherd, Consultant Haematologist, National Blood Service, to Mr Davies dated 16 March 1998
WITN4859004	Letter from Dr Alastair Millar, Consultant Physician, Tropical and Infectious Diseases Unit, Royal Liverpool Hospital, to Dr Cargill dated 02 February 2006
WITN4859005	Letter from Nicholas Fish, Skipton Fund, to Mr Davies dated 04 April 2016