

Witness Name: Annie Laing

Statement No: 1

Inquiry Reference No: PI203MF

THE PENROSE INQUIRY

Witness Statement of Annie Laing

I, Annie Laing, say as follows:-

1. I am 86 years of age having been born on 25 December 1924. I am retired and I am the widow of Alexander Laing who was born on 7 December 1923. My late husband died on 4 September 2003. The certified cause of death was Hepatitis C related liver disease. We married in 1951. My husband had been employed as a linesman for Hydro Electric and retired when he was 62 years of age (1985).

2. My husband had surgery in 1990 (7 August 1990) for bowel cancer. The surgery performed was called Duke's C and was carried out at Forresterhill Hospital, Aberdeen. His surgeon was Mr Keenan. There were no problems in relation to the surgery and my husband made a good recovery. I cannot recall if my husband had a blood transfusion during or post surgery. However my daughter, Susan MacLean recalls that he did have a blood transfusion at some stage.

3. My husband continued attending outpatients for five years post surgery. After my husband attended for what I believe was supposed to have been his last out-patients appointment (1995) he returned home and told me that Mr Keenan (I have been told by the interviewer that the Inquiry records show this would have been Dr T Sinclair, Consultant Gastroenterologist) had said to him that he had some good news and some bad news. The good news was that the cancer was clear and the bad news was that he had Hepatitis C. Mr Keenan told him that he had contracted Hepatitis C through the blood transfusion he had received during surgery in 1990. My husband

didn't say any more about it. I don't know if Mr Keenan discussed any more with my husband.

4. From this time on my husband attended his GP, which would have been Dr Lynch or Dr C Sinclair, every six months for blood tests. He never mentioned anything to me about the results of the blood tests.

5. At some point my husband told me that Mr Keenan had said that there was not a lot they could do in relation to the Hepatitis C. He said that he could have treatment for the Hepatitis C but that it wouldn't make much difference and might actually make him worse. My husband didn't really discuss it any more and just got on with his life.

6. I can't say if my husband was referred to any other doctor in relation to the Hepatitis C. I was aware he was attending hospital appointments but I was under the impression he was seeing Mr Keenan. I didn't attend the hospital appointments with my husband.

7. After my husband told me he had Hepatitis C, the only time I was actually aware of it, was when he had a cut he would always tell us, myself and family members, to stay away from him. My family and I were never personally offered any testing for Hepatitis C.

8. In around the year 2000 my husband started to become tired, had a poor appetite and lost weight. He had a tremor in both hands. He had had a tremor before but it was worse now. He was sleeping a lot of the time and gave up his hobby of bowling.

9. In January 2002 he began vomiting. He was spending a lot of time in bed but not sleeping much. He was not the kind of man who went to the doctor (GP).

10. In June 2003 (2 June 2003) he was really unwell and he couldn't even get out of bed to go to the toilet. My daughter and I had to help him to the

toilet. He was vomiting, his abdomen was distended, his speech was slurred and he was dribbling from his mouth. I telephoned the GP who came to see my husband and he was admitted to Woodend Hospital, Aberdeen for 5 days. After he was admitted to Woodend Hospital he was at home for around one month.

11. My husband was admitted to the ARI in July 2003 for most of that month. He was discharged at the end of July, but was at home for just one day before his GP saw him at home and admitted him back to the ARI.

12. About the end of August 2003 the doctor told me that there was nothing more they could do for my husband and we would need to look for a home for him to go to. However, my husband passed away on 4 September 2003 before there had been an opportunity to have him moved to a home.

13. My husband didn't tell anyone he had Hepatitis C apart from family and close friends. He said that when he went to hospital he was always taken in last and the people dealing with him had to wear gloves.

14. My husband was a fit person and myself and family feel that if he hadn't contracted Hepatitis C he would still have been here now.

15. I applied to the Skipton Fund after my husband's death and I received a payment of £20,000 and a second payment of £25,000.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed *Annie Laing*

Date *2-2-2011*