CLANN: IRELAND'S UNMARRIED MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN: GATHERING THE DATA

Statement of Witness 27

Reference Code:	CLANN/WIT27
Status:	Adopted Person
Institution(s)/Agencies:	Marian Vale Mother and Baby Home, Newry; St Clare's, Stamullen; Adoption Board; Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency; Family Care Society, Belfast
Date:	30th November 2016
Transcript:	8 pages
Records/Papers included:	Yes. Oral history interview included as addendum.
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WITNESS STATEMENT OF [redacted]

I, [redacted] of [redacted] Ireland WILL SAY:

1. I make this statement for the purpose of providing evidence to the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation established by the Irish Government pursuant to Section 3 of the Commissions of Investigations Act 2004.

2. Attached to this statement is a bundle of documents marked [redacted] References to page numbers in this statement are to pages in [redacted]

3. I make this statement as an adopted person.

Circumstances of my Birth and Early Life

4. I was born on [redacted] 1964 in [redacted] Hospital, Newry. On [redacted] 1964 my birth mother returned to Marian Vale Mother and Baby Home, Armagh Road, Newry ("Marian Vale") where she left me and I remained until [redacted] 1964. My mother returned to her home in [redacted] with her husband. On the evening of [redacted] 1964 I was moved across the border to St Clare's in Stamullen where I was placed that same night with my adoptive parents. I am now fifty-two years old.

5. From information that I have obtained, I know that my birth mother was married to my birth father at the time she gave birth to me but they were unmarried at the time of my conception. My birth mother travelled from [redacted] to Marian Vale in Northern Ireland and spent two months there before she gave birth to me. She gave what I now know to be a false name of [redacted] My birth name was registered as [redacted] My investigations lead me to believe that I spent eleven days with my birth mother. I was baptised on the day after my birth on [redacted] 1964 in the hospital church.

Information and finding out about my Birth Parents

6. I have always known that I was adopted. I was placed with my adoptive parents at the age of 3 weeks and the Adoption Order, which was organised by St Claire's in Stamullen, was made in my original identity and was granted on [redacted] 1965.

7. In 1997, I made a request to the Adoption Board in Dublin seeking information about my birth parents and requesting that they be traced (page1). In May 1999 I was sent a letter with scant, non-identifying information about my birth mother (page 2-3). The information stated simply that my mother was Roman Catholic and [redacted] years of age at the time of the Adoption Order. The number of the Adoption Order was given [redacted] but there was no information about her name or my birth father. I was told that I would be put on a waiting list and they would eventually get around to me.

8. By the end of 1999 I had not heard anything further so I rang and was told that the first thing they would look for was my birth certificate. I decided that I should look for this myself so I travelled to Northern Ireland. It quickly became apparent that I did not have enough information to enable me to do this. I was fortunate that the Registrar was able to look up details of all the births in Newry on [redacted] 1964 and there had been only one girl born in the Ballybot area, me. My birth mother's name was noted as [redacted] and the address at Marian Vale was given.

9. I was finally able to see my birth certificate for the first time (page 4). I now had a name for my birth mother and I knew roughly her date of birth from her age at the time of my birth. The Registrar looked for her birth certificate searching five years either side of the rough date to see if they could find [redacted] but there was no trace of her in Northern Ireland.

10. By early 2000, now that I thought I had my mother's birth name, I used the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency in Belfast to try and trace her. They located a [redacted] but this wasn't my mother.

11. At the same time I visited Marian Vale. I was told that all the records had been held by the Sisters of St. Clare. I rang several nunneries but was told they did not have the records.

12. I didn't give up and eventually spoke to a nun who told me the records had been moved to the Family Care Centre in Belfast. They were eventually located in 2000.

13. I had made enquiries of both the Adoption Board in Dublin and the Family Care Society in Belfast. It was the Family Care Society who rang and asked to meet me saying they had information about my case. I was panicking thinking that they had found my mother but what the social worker wanted to tell me was that the reason I couldn't find my mother was because she had given a false name. The social worker had her real name but she wasn't able to tell me what it was although she did promise to write to my birth mother.

14. The social worker wrote to my birth mother in 2000 using an address in [redacted] which was in the records and her true name. My birth mother telephoned her immediately and was very angry denying she was the person they were seeking. From the information my birth mother was given and the way she reacted to being told contact was in relation to "someone she had met in 1964" the social workers were sure that they had the right person. The social worker reassured me that they would try and contact her again after a year which she did but again without success and she indicated that further contact would not be appreciated (page 5). At this point they closed my file as there was nothing else to do but they did give me her name, [redacted] and told me that she had other children.

15. I finally obtained access to my records from the Family Care Society in November 2005 travelling to Northern Ireland to collect them. During the six years it took me to obtain access to my records I was told repeatedly by the Adoption Society in Dublin that I wasn't entitled to see the records. I believe that the reason I was eventually given my records was that the social workers in Northern Ireland told me about another adoptee who had taken his case to court and won the right to see the information about his birth father following the death of his birth mother. They suggested this might help me and made the investigations on my behalf.

16. When I received my records (pages 6-9) they showed that my birth mother left me at Marian Vale on [redacted] and travelled to [redacted] to the address the social workers had written to all those years later. There was an "Other Details" note was in my records where a note had been added to record my birth mother's identification as [redacted] now Mrs [redacted]".

17. I now had an address and I wrote to it at the end of January 2006 and drove there to have a look at the house although I didn't attempt to make contact. I received no reply and eventually wrote a further four times. In April 2006 in desperation I went to visit the parish priest for the area who was very lovely to me. He asked to see the proof I had and I asked if my mother was well. He confirmed that she was and he offered to write to her and try and set up a meeting for which I was very grateful. I rang the priest a few weeks later and he confirmed that he had written the letter and handed it to my mother in person. Around this time the sister of a friend gave me a photograph which had been taken at a parish event in [redacted] which showed my birth mother, her husband and [redacted] sons and [redacted].

18. During the weekend of my visit to the priest I was talking casually to a local barman and asked him about the [redacted]. He told me that their daughter [redacted] was doing very well as a [redacted] and was something of a local celebrity. I searched the internet and found her biography which gave me more information to work with.

19. When neither the Priest nor I had any success I rang the social worker at the Family Care Society in Northern Ireland again for advice and she suggested that I write again to my birth mother to say that I would be calling at a specific date and time. I did this and received a phone call the next day saying that she wasn't my mother but that she would meet me at a hotel car park in [redacted]

20. I drove to [redacted] taking friends with me for moral support. They went into the hotel and I waited in the car. As soon as I saw her I knew she was my mother although she still denied it. We sat talking in the car and after about forty five minutes she kept trying to hold my hand but I pulled away. She told me that she hadn't told her husband that we

were meeting and suggested we went into the hotel for a coffee. I was very angry that she was still not admitting that she was my mother so I left the car, slamming the door, she just sat there. My friends had spotted a man in the hotel lobby and prowling around the car park looking across at the car where we were sitting and had recognised him from the photograph and said that he was my birth mother's husband. I approached him in the lobby and said who I was, he was very tall and he bent down to shout in my face "Go away, do you have any idea of the damage you can do?"

21. I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder after this encounter and underwent counselling. I experienced flashbacks and had breathing difficulties and skin problems. After five sessions the counsellor suggested that I should put this behind me and try and move forward. My family and friends were also concerned that I was making myself unwell when I still wasn't absolutely sure that I had the right person. For a year after this I did no further investigations.

22. After a year I felt compelled to "see it through" and started to check the internet to look for signs of the woman I believed was my birth mother.

23. I felt stronger in 2006 and was able to trace the nun who had looked after me for the eleven days I was in Marian Vale. She was very happy to see me and said that she remembered Violet and me because my birth mother was the only girl in the home who had been married and hadn't looked after her baby and had left with her husband. The nun had been quite young at the time and, because my mother had left me immediately after her discharge from hospital rather than looking after me at the home until my adoption (which was usual), she had cared for me and therefore remembered me.

24. As part of my records there was mention of the "Other Details" also being added to my baptismal record and I decided to investigate this further. The Church of St Peter & Paul Newry was the nearest church to the hospital where I was born so I went there. The Custodian located my baptismal records and when he went to make coffee left me with them and I was able to take photographs of them. They recorded my birth parents names (including her married and maiden name) and an address (which turned out to be a false address). Brackets had been inserted and names had been marked with * * (page 10) and there was also a note in Latin, which I assume a priest had added, saying that I was the female offspring of [redacted] given up for adoption because she was not her husband's child (page 11). I knew then that I had been one hundred per cent correct about my birth mother's identity regardless of her denials.

25. The woman identified was the woman I had believed to be my birth mother and with whom I had made contact. When I returned home I rang her and spoke to her daughter-in-law, she told me that [redacted] was not available and she would ask her to call me back.

My birth mother rang back and shouted down the phone that I must not dare to ring back and who did I think I was? I explained that I had evidence from my baptismal record, corrected by a priest. She slammed the phone down but the phone did not cut off and I heard her shout "I have done that now, are you happy?" I believe that her husband was on a second phone and hadn't hung up.

26. I now had enough information to find my birth mother's birth certificate and her marriage certificate in the GRO in Dublin and I discovered that she had been [redacted] at the time she fell pregnant with me and that her husband had been [redacted] Her marriage certificate indicated that she had worked in the [redacted] (page 12). After some research I found out that this was a home for priests [redacted] and could be home to up to [redacted] priests at any one time. For a while I believed that my birth father must have been a priest which was why she had given me up for adoption. This made sense to me. I rang the Bishop of [redacted] and spoke to his Press Secretary. I asked if there were any priests who had lived in the [redacted] in 1964 who would be prepared to talk to me. They arranged for me to have a conversation with a priest who told me that he hadn't known that my birth mother had given birth but that she had been going out with an older man and he had wondered at the time how "a dishwasher had bagged the richest man in [redacted]". He was of the view that "it wouldn't have looked good" for a respected man in his late thirty's to have got a [redacted] year old pregnant.

27. I had started going to mass at the church where my birth mother worshipped. By 2011 I was increasingly frustrated and so I wrote to her saying that I was going to apply to be a guest on a popular radio show in Dublin called "Joe Duffy". It was eleven weeks later after I had "liked" a post by her daughter on a Facebook page that my birth mother rang saying she would meet me. Her son came with her to the hotel in [redacted] where we had previously met. She immediately told me that she was my birth mother. I asked who my father was and she told me that it was her husband. I was completely shocked. We talked and she cried but I still felt she was holding back, perhaps because her son was there. As she left she said that I could ring her at any time but not to say who I was.

28. My birth mother told me that on the day I was born I was taken off her. I know that this is not true because the nun who looked after me said that my mother had left me in the home after my birth. I believe that I had originally been intended for adoption to the US because this is what the nun told me. This might tie in with something which my adopted mother told me, my adopted parents had been originally offered twin girls but my adopted father had felt this was too much. My adopted mother had been distraught to turn them down and had been told by a nun not to worry they would get her another baby. My

parents were rung up not long after and told on very short notice to come to St. Clare's in Stamullen, in the dark, to pick me up.

29. I have a lot of questions about my family but my birth mother has never been able to meet me on her own.

30. My adoptive parents have been loving and supportive of me all my life. However, even in circumstances where I have had a strong and loving family life, for most of my life I have felt terrified that I would be "given back" and I have always felt the need to seek approval and be liked. I was made to feel embarrassed at junior school because I was adopted and I have been very affected as an adult. I always believed that my birth mother must have been very young and made to give me up for adoption but the actual circumstances of my birth were very far from this. I have suffered from anxiety for much of my life and I still have dreams about my birth mother where I wake up feeling that I am unable to breathe. I feel very emotional if I see something in a TV drama or in the news which mirrors my own situation and some days I feel as if I just can't move on. The years of searching for the truth and the meetings with my birth mother were so traumatic that it still rips me apart.

Access to Information

31. At the time of my birth, in Ireland, only orphans and children born outside marriage could be the subject of an Adoption Order. It is clear that I was neither of these which would explain why my mother gave a false name on my birth certificate. It is clear to me that the authorities at the hospital, the priest who baptised me and Marian Vale knew that my mother was giving false information which explains the notes about her identity and the annotation in Latin. I spoke to a priest recently who said that he had never seen anything like it before.

32. I strongly feel that it would have been better for me if my birth mothers correct name had been given at the time of my birth. If it had and my birth mother when contacted, instead of being able to deny that she was my birth mother, had just said that she didn't want to have contact with me I think that I would have dropped it and not spent the years I did trying to find out the truth.

33. I am not able to comment on the pressures on my parents particularly my mother to send me for adoption because I have not been able to speak to her about it. However, I do think that the manner in which information is handed over to adopted children needs looking at. Whilst I was fortunate in being able to obtain information from the authorities in Northern Ireland, to be given scant information from the Adoption Board in Dublin feels wholly inappropriate when I now know that they did have full information all the time.

34. I feel strongly that the way information is released means that my birth parents lives have not been affected by this in the way mine has. They have not jeopardised anything.

35. I would also like to comment on the difficulty that adopted children have in obtaining a copy of their own birth certificate. I appreciate that there is a balance to be struck between the right to privacy of birth mothers and fathers and the interests of the adopted child but in my view that is not a justification for preventing a person from seeing their own birth certificate.

36. I particularly wanted to see my Adoption Order to see if my birth mother had used the false name, I have still not seen it (page 13-14).

37. I believe that the contents of this statement are true.

Signed [redacted]

[redacted]

Date 30/11/16



All redactions have been carried out by the Clann Project

[redacted]
Statement
November 2016
Exhibit "[redacted]"

IN THE MATTER OF

The Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation
Established by the Irish Government

EXHIBIT [redacted]

North Eastern Health Board
Bord Sláinte An Oir Thoir

REGIONAL CHILD & FAMILY CENTRE,
St. Mary's Hospital,
Dublin Road,
Drogheda,
Co. Louth.
Tel.: (041) 30990 / 30991 / 32963

Ms. [redacted]

[redacted]

Our reference No: [redacted]

21st May, 1997

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your letter of the 8th May, 1997. At present due to the large number of enquiries we have, we have found it necessary to establish a waiting list. Unfortunately it will be at least 9 months before we will be in a position to deal fully with your enquiry.

In the meantime on the basis of the information you have given us a preliminary search will be made for your records.

Because of the difficult and sensitive nature of tracing birth parents, we would recommend that you receive as much support and advice you need from an appropriate counsellor in your area.

As soon as we are in a position to deal with your enquiry, we will be in touch with you.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

A/Senior Social Worker - Child Placement Team

N.B. Please quote your reference number on all correspondence

(1)

North Eastern Health Board
Bord Sláinte An Oir Thuaiscirt

Adoption Service, North Eastern Health Board
St. Mary's Hospital,
Dublin Road, Drogheda, Co. Louth.
Tel: 041-9832963 / 9841038
Fax: 041-9833067

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

13th May 1999

Mrs [redacted]
[redacted]

Ref: [redacted]

Dear [redacted],

I enclose the non-identifying information found on your adoption file. As you can see it was extremely scant, more than usual I would say. Unfortunately, there is no indication as to see in which hospital you were born. When we are in a position to begin tracing for you, we will hopefully be able to procure some further information.

In the meantime, I am sorry that there is such limited information available to us to pass on to you. We will be in touch with you as soon as we are in a position to process your enquiry.

Thank you for your patience in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted]
Senior Social Worker

(2)

[redacted]

NORTH EASTERN HEALTH BOARD

SUMMARY SOCIAL HISTORY

NON IDENTIFYING INFORMATION AVAILABLE

No information on file re: hospital

Place of Birth (Province) ? Newry d.o.b. [redacted] - 64

Birth Weight 8lbs 15ozs Date of Baptism _____

Date of Placement [redacted] - 64

Adopted by:

Name & Address [redacted]

Number of Adoption Order [redacted]

Birth Mother:

Age of Mother [redacted] Nationality _____ Religion _____

Status _____ Occupation at Birth _____

Hobbies _____ Education _____

Health _____ Description _____

_____

Birth Father:

information on file on either birth parent.

Age of Father _____ Nationality _____ Religion _____

Occupation _____ Health _____ Status _____

Education NK Hobbies _____

Description _____

_____

Medical Information

P.K.U. _____ B.C.G. _____ Other _____

(3)

my Birth Cert

WARNING – This certificate is NOT evidence of the identity of the person presenting it.

The Births and Deaths Registration (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, Article 34

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH

[redacted]

BIRTHS registered in the District of BALLYBOT NEWRY [redacted]

No. (1)	Date and Place of Birth (2)	*Name (if any) (3)	Sex (4)	Name and Surname and Dwelling-place of Father (5)	Name and Surname and Maiden Surname of Mother (6)	Rank or Profession of Father (7)	Signature, Qualification and Residence of Informant (8)	When Registered (9)	Signature of Registrar (10)	Baptismal Name if added after Registration of Birth and Date (11)
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	F		[redacted] Home Duties Marian Dale † formerly Annagh Rd		[redacted] Mother Marian Dale Annagh Rd	1964	[redacted] † Registrar	

Certified to be a true copy of an entry in a register in the custody of the Registrar General and given under the SEAL of the General Register Office, Belfast.

this 21st day of October 19 99

Central Register Office for Northern Ireland £4 [redacted]

The Registrar General shall cause any certified copy of an entry given in the General Register Office to be stamped with the seal of the Office, of which judicial notice shall be taken.

CAUTION:– Any person who (1) falsifies any of the particulars on this certificate, or (2) uses a falsified Certificate as true, knowing it to be false, or (3) passes as genuine any reproduction of this certificate, knowing that the reproduction is not the Certified Copy, is liable to prosecution.

(4)

Family Care society



20 April 2001

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL
ADDRESSEE ONLY

Mrs [redacted]
[redacted]
Eire

Dear [redacted]

I hope that you are well.

I would like to update you regarding our search for [redacted] although the news is not good.

As you are aware, I had agreed to contact [redacted] again after Christmas, which I did.

I suggested to [redacted] that I had additional information from another source, which suggested that she could help me.

[redacted] was extremely angry about my second contact, and denied on several occasions that she was the lady whom we are seeking. [redacted] could not explain how details appearing to relate to her appeared on documents which I had access to, and stated that she did not know and had never known any Sister [redacted]

[redacted] was very clear that she did not wish me to make contact again, and also stated that contact from anyone else would not be appreciated, or serve any purpose.

I know that this is not what you want to hear [redacted] but I do not feel that there is any more that we can do. She is not willing to acknowledge who she is, or who you are, and our contacting her again seems to have strengthened her determination.

There may come a time when [redacted] is able to respond differently, and she has my name and number if she wants to use it.

For now however, I think that you would only be upsetting yourself by trying to pursue this any further.

5

511 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 3GS. Tel: 028 9069 1133 Fax: 028 9064 9849
1(a) Miller Street, Derry, BT48 6SU. Tel: 028 7136 8592 Fax: 028 7137 2611

Family Care
society

RECEIPT OF INFORMATION

This information is provided on the following understanding;

(1) That it is a record of information regarding the birth mother given at or around the time of the adopted person's birth.

(2) That is has not been confirmed or verified by the birth mother.

(3) That the accuracy of the information cannot therefore be guaranteed by the Agency.

(4) That this information is confidential to the adopted person and should be treated as such.

I have read, understand and accept the above statements.

Sign [redacted]

Date: 12th Dec 05

Countersigned by Social Worker [redacted]

(6)

311 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 3GS. Tel: 028 9069 1133. Fax: 028 9064 9849. Email:email@family-care-society.org Web:www.family-care-society.org

Notes From Mother and Baby Home

Vol.

[redacted] ([redacted] maiden name.) [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Co. Tipperary

Date of Adm. [redacted] 1964.

" " Birth - [redacted] - [redacted] yrs.

L.M.P. [redacted] '63 E.D.D. [redacted] 1964

next of kin: MR [redacted], Co. [redacted] (husband).

[redacted] 1964. Admitted to Daisy Hill Hosp.

[redacted] 1964. normal delivery of living female infant B.W. 8 lbs. 15 Oz

[redacted] 1964. [redacted] & baby [redacted] disch. from Hosp.

[redacted] 1964. [redacted] left our home to go to MR [redacted], Co. [redacted]

Ph. [redacted] between 7 & 8.30 AM. (not Sunday OR Monday

[redacted] 1964. Baby [redacted] left our home, and was placed for adoption that evening, through Stanullen Adoption Society (in Dublin).

Ring [redacted] [redacted]. Co. [redacted]

eleven 7 a 8.30 AM

(7)

Family Care society

[redacted] – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Birth Name	[redacted]
Date of Birth	[redacted] 1964
Place of Birth	Daisy Hill Maternity Hospital. Newry
Birth weight	8lbs 15oz
Date of Baptism	[redacted] 1964
Place of Baptism	Church of St Peter & St Paul. Bessbrook. Newry
Baby placement	Stamullen Baby Home
On	[redacted] 1964
Adoptive placement	Mr & Mrs [redacted]
Of	[redacted] Dublin
Adoptive Name	[redacted]

Details given by Birth Mother

Birth mother	[redacted]
Age	[redacted] years
Date of Birth	[redacted]
Denomination	Roman Catholic
Temporary Address	Marian Vale. Armagh Road. Newry
Home Address	[redacted]
Next of Kin	Mr [redacted]
Of	[redacted]
Discharged to	[redacted]
On	[redacted] August 1964

(6)

511 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 3GS. Tel: 028 9069 1133. Fax: 028 9064 9849. Email:email@family-care-society.org Web:www.family-care-society.org

11a) Miller Street, Derry, BT48 6SU. Tel: 028 7136 8592. Fax: 028 7137 2611. Email:email@family-care-society.org Web:www.family-care-society.org

Other details

A note added to the Marian Vale record identifies [redacted] as [redacted] now Mrs [redacted].

This entry is not dated, and there is no record of by whom it was attached.

The baptism record has also had these details added.

Mrs [redacted], married to Mr [redacted] of [redacted], has been contacted on a number of occasions.

She confirms her name, maiden name, address, spouse's name, date of birth, and age, but denies ever having been in Marian Vale, or having had a child in [redacted] 1964.

Mrs [redacted] cannot account for the use of her name and personal details, but states categorically that she is not the lady in question.

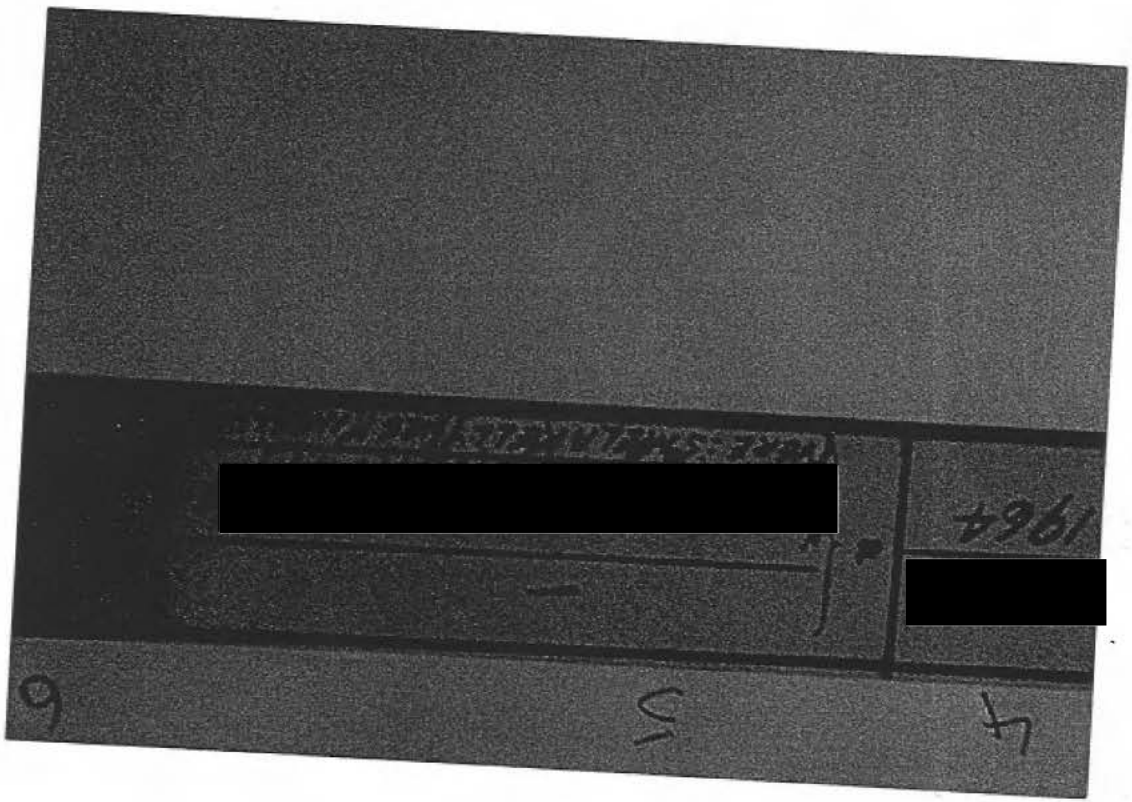
Mrs [redacted] is aware that this information will be passed on to the adopted adult [redacted] at the end of November 2005.

[redacted]

[redacted]
Senior Practitioner

30th November 2005

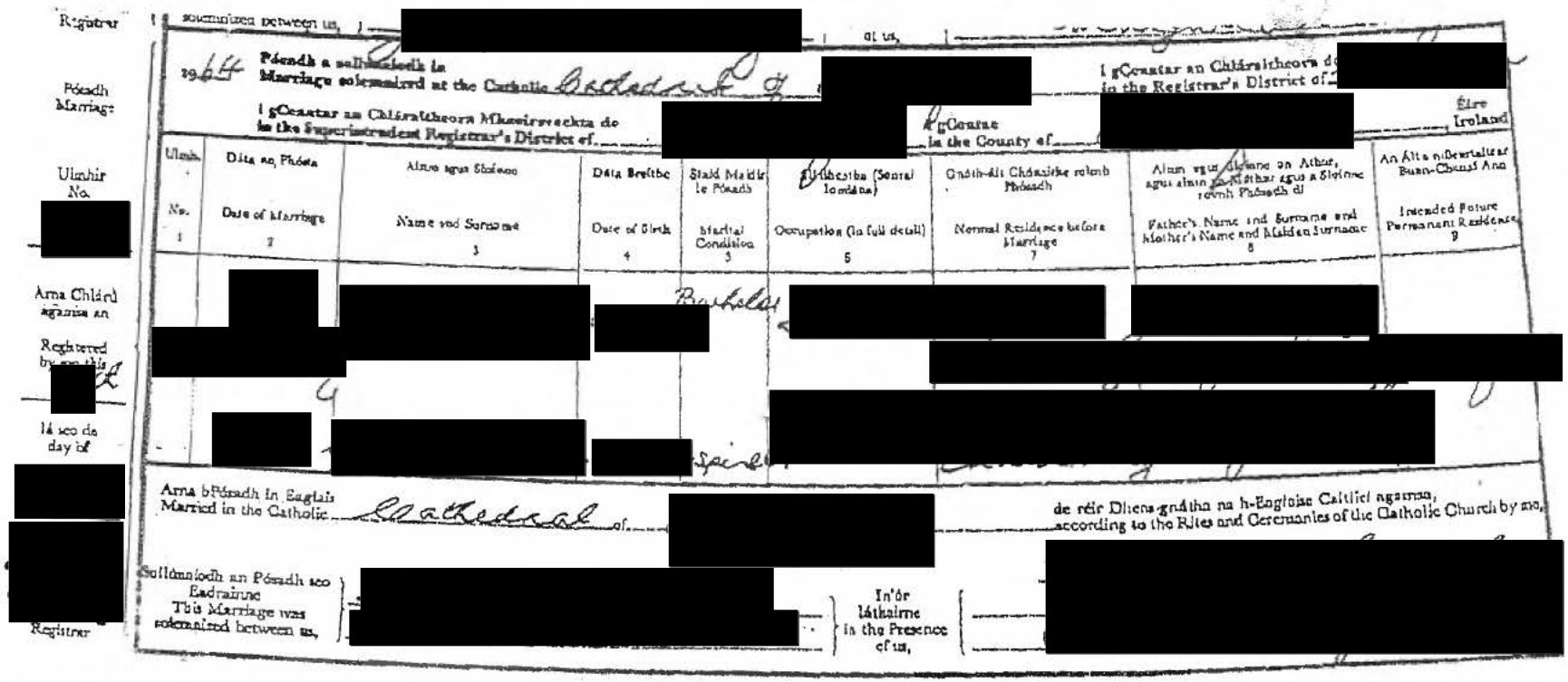
01



(11)


Ph +33 (0)5 62 428 428
[redacted]
M 0453
FRAME TWO China Blue,
RTÉ2, 8pm
Tonight's Frame Two offering is
a shocking documentary that
COGAR Gotha
Dobhair. TG4,
An Attitude in
tells a story of

[redacted] parents marriage cert



Registrar

Pósadh Marriage

Uimhir No. [redacted]

Arna Chlárú againne an [redacted]

Registered by me this [redacted]

Lá seo de day of [redacted]

Registrar

Solemnized between us, [redacted] and us,

1964 Pósadh a solemnized in Marriage solemnized at the Catholic Cathedral of [redacted]

I gContae an Chláraitheora Mhuirearchta do in the Superintendent Registrar's District of [redacted]

I gContae in the County of [redacted]

Uimh. No. 1	Dáta na Pósta Date of Marriage 2	Ainm agus Sloinne Name and Surname 3	Dáta Breithe Date of Birth 4	Staid Maidir le Pósadh Marital Condition 5	Ullmhaitha (Sonraí Iomlána) Occupation (in full detail) 6	Gnáth-áit Chónaithe roimh Phósadh Normal Residence before Marriage 7	Ainm agus sloinne an Athar, agus ainm agus sloinne roimh Phósadh di Father's Name and Surname and Mother's Name and Maiden Surname 8	An Áit a mBeartaítear Buan-Chónaí Ann Intended Future Permanent Residence 9
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	Bachelor	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	Spinster	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

Arna bPósadh in Eaglais Married in the Catholic Cathedral of [redacted] de réir Dhíonsgnátha na hEaglaise Caitlicí againne, according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Catholic Church by us,

Solúmaíodh an Pósadh seo Eadrainne This Marriage was solemnized between us, [redacted] In'ár láthair In the Presence of us, [redacted]

12

[redacted]

Adoption Board
Shelbourne House
Shelbourne Road
Ballsbridge
Dublin 4

19.12.13

Re: [redacted]

Dear Mr. [redacted]

I am writing to you in connection with my adoption which took place following my birth in [redacted] 1964.
I am requesting a copy of every piece of information you hold in relation to my adoption under the Freedom Of Information Act. I understand that the adoption was carried out illegally (see adoption act 1952) due to the following reasons.

- [x] False information was inserted on my birth certificated – including [redacted] being recorded as my mother, but no such person existed.
- [x] Both parents were married to each other at the time. Also there was a blank on the birth certificated for the father's name, which shouldn't have been the case.
- [x] I understand that special orders can be make in similar circumstances to the above to allow for the adoption to take place. However I have conformation from yourselves that no special order was ever made.

The reason I am pointing out the illegal status of my adoption is to ensure that you provide me with a copy of all the information you hold, as the contract could not of been binding.
Should you require information in order to process my request, please contact me.

I trust you will be able to provide me with the information as soon as possible.

Many thanks

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Údarás Uchtála na hÉireann
Teach Shíol Bhroin,
Bóthar Shíol Bhroin,
Droichead na Dothra,
Baile Átha Cliath 4.

Fón: (01) 2309300
Faics: (01) 6671438
www.aai.gov.ie



Adoption Authority of Ireland
Shelbourne House,
Shelbourne Road,
Ballsbridge,
Dublin 4.

Tel: (01) 2309300
Fax: (01) 6671438
www.aai.gov.ie

Private & Confidential

[redacted]

24th December 2013

Release of Adoption information under the Freedom of Information Act.

Dear Ms [redacted]

I refer to your correspondence dated 19th December 2013 re the above.

The Adoption Authority's adoption files are specifically excluded from the provisions of the Freedom of Information Acts.

Under current adoption legislation the only circumstances under which an adoption file can be released to any person is on foot of an Order by the High Court.

I would strongly advise you to seek independent legal advice before seeking such an order.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Information and Tracing Unit
Phone [redacted]

Oral History Interview
Clann Project
2026

Interview, Transcription, and Redaction Information

Interview date: 8th May 2026
Time: 2:22 PM
Interviewer: Cara Brophy-Browne
Interviewee/Witness: [redacted]

Key
Int. = Interviewer
Wit. = Witness
… = Short pause or where words are repeated or the speaker changes direction mid-sentence
blabla = spoken with great emphasis
(blabla) = Additional audible expressions, body language
[blabla] = Background information that might be helpful or addition made for clarity
[...] = Transcript has been edited for clarity or relevance

Notes on Redaction Process
• Named individuals and identifying information have been redacted.

Note on Editing
The interview transcript has been edited for clarity, relevance, and privacy.

To cite this interview:
Brophy-Browne, C. (2026) “Oral History Interview of Witness 27.” Clann: Ireland’s Unmarried Mothers and their Children: Gathering the Data. Dublin: Justice for Magdalenes Research, Adoption Rights Alliance, Hogan Lovells.

Int. Okay, so can you tell me about the process of obtaining your records from the adoption authorities?

Wit. Oh, well, that, that probably was the simplest thing. I just, you know, applied, they opened up the channels there a couple of years ago, and you just had to apply for them. And they were very easy to get, so, within a couple of months, I got all… and I think there might have been about 60 or 70 pages. So that was, you know, to just email them over, so that was kind of quite simple. Since then, I have tried, but I try, and then I, you know, then it kind of goes off the boil. I had tried to speak with them about it, but I… so I've never actually spoken to them about things that I had found in the adoption file that I'd like some…some answers to.

I did manage to talk to Tulsa, Tulsa, because they sent me information as well, but it was kind of just, they might have sent me 5 pages, but they were already included in the forms that I had got from the adoption authorities.

So, no, it wasn't hard getting them, but I haven't spoken to them yet about… and I'd love to, but.. I don't know, I'd ring…and then I'd be told to ring back, and I wouldn't, I'd put it on hold, or, you know… my worst enemy at times.

Int. So you said you obtained…60 documents or so. Can you tell me what documents you got, and then what was the… what information in them was significant to you?

Wit. Okay, so, well, there was lots of information about my parents. My adoptive parents, letters from their employers, you know, reference from the church, reference from the banks, so there was an awful lot of stuff on my… there was notes of home visits. From social workers to say that they were suitable parents, and then there was notes from, not from the… there was notes from, the consent of the adoption forms, there was letters from Justice of the Peace, there was letters that I had written to the adoption authorities, though, mind you, not all of them were included. There was some of them. But I have my original letters, and I have the letters that they sent me back, but they didn't include them in the ones that, you know, in the file that they sent. What else was there? There was case notes, there was, That was… kind of, yeah, follow-up notes

from the nuns in the mother and baby home. Saying that they had visited the house. No, not from the nuns, [redacted] from where I was adopted from, to say that they had done a home visit and that, you know, the baby's doing well. Those sort of stuff.

Int. And then, so you had said to me before that the… some of the documents show that there were irregular practices in the Marionville mother and baby home, so can you tell me a little bit about those documents and what exactly they were able to show to you?

Wit. Okay, so the mother… the… all the signatures are the same, like… this, I will have to send them over. So we… so I have… This is the mother and baby home, when… when [redacted] my birth mother, would have arrived, it kinda just had her name, which was false, but right beside it was… her correct name was put in. Her date of birth, her date of admission, her last monthly period, her next of kin, her address. Those kind of details that you're asked for on admission.

And then like, I have a copy of my baptismal cert. I have a copy of my adoption forms. And… what else is there? There's… anyway, all of the signatures are the same. They're all the same. So I'd say it was the one nun who filled out [redacted] adoption… my adoption form, saying that she was the birth mother. They're all the same signature, and I've asked a few people to have a look at it, and everyone was like, oh yeah, 100%, it is the same signature.

What I also then got was a list of correspondents. And the first one, it's from a Justice of the Peace whose name is [redacted] And, he's somewhere up the North. I actually do have his address somewhere. I do have his… Anyway, so he… So, he got… so… so Violet Murphy, my birth mother, signed the consent… the consent… the consent to adopt in front of him. Okay. So, he sent the consent and he sent his affidavit off to the adoption board, okay? So then the adoption board wrote back to him. To say that he was not known…What does it say here? Okay, that he is not known… A letter, but it says, as your signature is not known in this office, the board will be glad if you would state whether the consent was, in fact, executed before you. This is the adoption board writing to a Justice of the Peace to say, do they… do they know this guy, [redacted] Because his signature isn't known to them.

Okay, I know this is all very confusing, and then he writes back a letter to them, right? And the letter says, with reference to the letter. It says [...] In reference to

this letter, I cannot recall signing my name. Yeah, that's right. I asked AI to… I took a screenshot of it, and I asked AI to, to read… to, transcribe it. So there is a little mistake there, so it's… it's not absolutely perfect, but I know the gist of the letter. So it says, *[reading from a printed document]*

Birth mother's false name

In reference to the letter, I cannot recall signing my name to such…It says… [...] a Miss [redacted] called to me during the winter months, produced a form at my door and asked me to sign it. She made me believe it was for free school dinners for a girl who I do sign a lot of work for, believing this, I signed the letter at the door. Now, this is the le- this is my… my, this is my consent form to be adopted, and he's signing it at the door. Believing… I signed it at the door in the dark. Miss [redacted] is not known to me, nor was she introduced to me. Hoping this statement will satisfy you and your department.

So anyway, so they scrapped… they scrapped his… his… so they scrapped that, and then they went and they found a new Justice of the Peace to sign the adoption papers. But I do have that letter that he… that he signed, and the correspondence from the adoption board saying that they don't know him, and that, the… the chief clerk in the courthouse in [redacted] doesn't know him either.

So, I reckon… well, so it was one of the nuns, he just made up that story. It was one of the nuns who came into him and just said, listen, will you just sign that? My birth mother said she never signed anything, and I do believe that. Yeah.

Int. So your birth mother… didn't sign the consent to adopt? This justice of the peace you think was approached by a nun from the…

Wit. Oh, absolutely. Now, when I say she didn't sign, it's not like she didn't want to sign. She did. When I was born, she went off, she went back to her husband. Actually, by the time these forms were being signed, she had actually had another baby. She was married at that stage, and she had another baby when all that was going on. So she left the mother and baby… she left the hospital a couple of days after I was born, and never returned back up to the North to sign anything. And she was quite… she was quite happy to say, you know…

Int. Okay, and then… you also spoke a bit about getting in contact with your birth father. And that you learned more from him about the circumstances of your…

of your birth and your… of your adoption. Would you like to tell me a bit more about that?

Wit. Yeah, and just before I… can I… can I just… just another thing, just while I was… that was in the case notes. I don't think I sent you a copy of this. It was just some case notes made, and it's a… it was written in the year 2000. And, it's from [redacted] she's in… works in the Adoption Board, and she just wrote a letter just, you know, about… about me, and that I'm very… that I'm very keen on finding my mother, and that she thinks that I probably will, but she does say that someone else knows about the child because apparently, a man called to the church making inquiries 5 years ago. So, I don't know who that is. My birth father did say that he… he… I don't know if it was him, or if it was… if it was someone else who I contacted. Which would have been my birth mother's [...] husband's [brother], right? Her… my birth mother's husband's brother arranged for my adoption… arranged for me to go up the North to… to be, to the mother and baby home up there. And he always thought that he was… he always thought that it was… he always felt very guilty about me being put up for adoption. He was the one who told me everything in the end, and then I made contact with my birth father.

But I think it might have been him. Actually, he's dead now, my birth father's dead now, so I'll never know who the man was, but, like, I mean, it was in 1995. I've been trying to trace for absolutely years and years, and the fact that, you know, they had all this information. I mean, I was an adult, he was an adult, you know, why, you know, why… I signed the thing years ago, you know, it was a tracing, you know, they sent them to all the houses in Ireland, I don't know if you remember it, you don't no, and if you were adopted, you signed, and they set up a central record. I mean, they could have told me that back then, I would have saved absolutely years and years of heartache.

Int. Yeah, absolutely, and could have had some more time with your birth father as well, because it seems like you did have a lovely relationship once you got to know each other.

Wit. Absolutely, yeah, we did. Yeah, it only lasted about two and a half years, but… You know, he was all on for it, and definitely could have had 25 more years. Yeah. If… You know? If I had been told that. I know, that makes me so sad.

Int. It is… it is… actually, well, the next question was…how do you think it would have impacted you if you had have had access to this, information sooner, but I guess we already…

Wit. Yeah. Oh, yeah, no, my life would… I have put so much time… I mean, far too much time when I think of it, into trying to trace my birth mother. And then she didn't want to know me, and she was saying, oh, it's not, you know, you have the wrong person. Then I kind of went back to the drawing board, and I said, do I have the wrong person? And, it was kind of only with, you know, Facebook, and, I mean, I found a lot, you know, tracing people, but I spent
God, ugh. I was totally consumed by it. You know, I should have been doing other things, you know? Not…

I had… I have old phone directories from 1965, like, on my birth rec… on my birth… on the… in the mother and baby home, for instance, there's, there's a thing that it says, baby [redacted] left our home and was placed for adoption that evening, and it says, ring and [redacted]…County [redacted] between 7am and 8am. Not on a Monday or Sunday.

So I actually found an old phone book from [redacted] in a 1960… I think I could only get a 1965 one, and I went through all the phone numbers till I found [redacted] Like, can you, like, go through phone… just phone numbers? I didn't have any… at this stage, I didn't know their name was [redacted] but I did find [redacted] and I did write to those people, but that took…You know, I'm just so consumed in it. Jesus, I should have been…I should have been minding me kids, doing stuff, I… yeah, so I know all of that, you know, maybe at a…maybe I'd have, like, could have trained to be a doctor. I could be a top surgeon, I tell you, in Ireland, if I had put as much energy into that as I did into just trying to get answers. You know?

[...]

Int. Do you feel… do you think at this point, do you feel satisfied with the answers that you have now? Do you think you have a good understanding of what happened, or are there still kind of some…

Wit. There's… yeah, I kind of talk to myself a lot, and I do know that because my birth father was a priest at the time, I'd say, and my mother was married, so

when she had the affair. So, I wasn't… I wasn't illegitimate. Yeah. So I could not be placed for adoption, because you had to be illegitimate to be placed for adoption in Ireland back then, and always the husband of the mother was always deemed the father. So that's why they had to…That's why she had to go to a mother and baby home, and change her name, and change her, her address, and put loads of false information. so that I was able to be placed for adoption. If they hadn't done all that, I probably wouldn't have been in place for adoption, and I could have ended up in a baby home, you know, forever.

[...]
You know, you shouldn't have lied, you shouldn't have… you shouldn't have given her a false name. I searched for a [redacted] in [redacted] I went into… you know, this was before I got her real name. Then I spent months and months and months looking for someone who… who didn't exist, you know? I do see senses at times, but then, you know, you just get so frustrated.

Int. And you think they knew in the Mother and Baby home, in Marionville that that…

Wit. Oh, God. Yeah. Oh, oh, they did, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Int. On another document you got, right?

Wit Yeah, there was… yeah, on my birth certificate… on my baptismal lines, which, that was… that was another thing, trying to find out what happened to my bapt… where my baptismal lines are, and going up the North, and going into… a church where I knew where they were, and I actually went up there on… I was off work, I work in [redacted] so I was off work, it was All Souls Day, what's that, the 1st of November? When I went up there to the church, the church was closed because it was All Souls Day, and the church was closed, and I knocked on the convent door, and I spoke to a nun, and I was telling her I was after coming up from Dublin to look for some records, and she says, oh, is it like *Who Do You Think You Are*, are you chasing your roots? And I went, oh yeah, yeah, it's just kind of, you know… I didn't tell her, you know, how serious it was, and she says, oh, do you want to go in and have a look at the baptismal register?

Now, she shouldn't have let me, like, that was… That was… I was just so lucky. And when I went through it, I did find my baptism lines, but there was a message written in Latin to say that [redacted] was a false name, and it gave me the name of my birth mother. It told me that she was married, it told me that her husband wasn't the father, all written in Latin, so then I had to go and get that transcribed. Like, this just took forever!

[...]
[in reference to a conversation with her birth mother] I always thought maybe the reason you gave me up for adoption was because, you know, you worked for… in the home for priests, and I always thought maybe my father was a priest. I mean, I hit the nail on the head, I didn't realize it, and she went [*does impression of someone laughing nervously]*

But now, when I think back, me saying it. I always thought my birth… I was actually even able to say his name, [redacted] because I had contacted the [redacted] father might have been a priest. Is it… is it possible that some of those priests are still around? And, he said to me, just give me your name, and give me your number, and I'll ring around, and I'll get back to you. And I says, oh, okay, hung up. And I'm telling you, within a half an hour, he rang me back, and he said, I'm after finding this priest, Father [redacted] what was his name? Oh, he had the strangest name. [redacted]… he was in [redacted] Father… God, can't remember his name. Anyway, I have it somewhere. And he said, I've spoken to him, and he will… and he will speak to you. So I traveled down to [redacted] in [redacted]

And, he remembered my birth mother. I said to him, was there any priests that she was kind of friendly with? And, he said, Oh, he said no! Really? No, no, no, I didn't know, she was engaged! No, no. And I thought that, and I says, alright, and I said, was there any other… was there any other young priests around that, you know, I could talk to? And he said, well, all the priests, he said, well, there's say, he said, there's Father [redacted] but he's dead. There's, Father [redacted]… what… oh no, he's dementia. He's… he's gone mad, you're wasting your time talking to him. There was Father [redacted] but he actually left to be a… he actually left and went to England, and I went… a priest left around the same time, and he said, yeah, a guy called [redacted] And, just there and then, I said, I bet you anything that's my birth father.

And I try to… can you imagine trying to find [redacted] in England?

And… but I was right, it was John [redacted] Now, I didn't find out whether it was him for definite for years and years and years later, but when I met her that day

in the… in the hotel, I had said to her, oh, I thought… I'm sure I thought my birth father was a priest, [redacted] and she nearly… she nearly died.

[...]

Int. And so are you… are you, you know, you were saying at the beginning that you think all the time that you spent, but would you say now it was worth…

Wit. Oh, yeah, it was worth it, but if people just hadn't lied and muddied the water and put these obstacles in front of me. Like, anybody…anybody else would have given up, and I know they would. Yeah. And it… and…

[...]

Yeah, years ago, I went looking for nuns that were in the mother and baby home. I found this nun, and I told her who I was, and she said she remembered me, and when I asked her why she remembered me, she told me that all the girls in the mother and baby home were single, and wished they were married, and could keep their babies, and the reason why she remembered [redacted] was because [redacted] was married, and she didn't want to keep her baby. So she said that she had minded me for those few days. So between the adoption…actually, she could have been the one that was signing all those forms, I don't know. But anyway, Sister [redacted] was her name, and she minded me, and I was going to tell you something else, and I completely went off track. But when I… when the nun saw me, and this must have been… when did I go to see her? I think it was about 2003, the first thing she said to me was, you were supposed to go to America.

Yeah, yeah, so this baby… mother and baby home, they did send an awful lot of the babies to America. So, I mean, they really, I mean, they changed Sheila's name, her address, they put up all this, you know, they really muddied the water, and you know, I was to go to America, and if I had gone to America, there's… there's no way I would have… I would have given up.

[...]