

OPUS2

Manchester Arena Inquiry

Day 8

September 21, 2020

Opus 2 - Official Court Reporters

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1 Monday, 21 September 2020
 2 (9.30 am)
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Greaney.
 4 MR GREANEY: Sir, good morning. This is the pen portrait of
 5 Nell Jones, who was aged 14 when she was killed. The
 6 pen portrait has been prepared by her family. Present
 7 in the hearings room are Jayne and Earnie, Nell's mum
 8 and dad, and Nell's older brothers, Sam, Joe and
 9 William. Many friends and family are watching our
 10 proceedings remotely, including Emma Jones, Sam's wife,
 11 and Emma Ingham, Joe's partner.
 12 Nell's eldest brother Sam, who sits alongside me,
 13 will read the family's tribute to Nell. A photograph of
 14 Nell will be displayed on the screen as he does so.
 15 Once Sam has completed the written tribute, we'll then
 16 watch a montage of photographs of Nell. At the
 17 beginning of that montage a song plays: the song is "Our
 18 Love Will Grow".
 19 Sir, I'll repeat that. Once Sam has completed the
 20 written tribute, we will watch a montage of photographs
 21 of Nell, at the beginning of which a song plays, and
 22 that song is "Our Love Will Grow" by The Showmen.
 23 Sir, I'll now invite Sam, once he's ready, to stand
 24 and read the family's tribute.
 25 Sam.

1

1 Pen portrait of NELL JONES
 2 SAM JONES: First of all, we would like to thank the inquiry
 3 team for giving us the opportunity to say a few words
 4 about our precious daughter and sister, Nell, and tell
 5 you a little bit about her. The first part of this
 6 portrait is being read on behalf of my mum and dad.
 7 Nell came into our family a little later in our
 8 lives. Having been blessed with three wonderful boys,
 9 to be told we were expecting a daughter was a real
 10 surprise especially considering no girls had been born
 11 on her father's side of the family for three
 12 generations. So when she was born on 16 April 2003,
 13 we were overjoyed.
 14 From the moment she was born there was something
 15 special about Nell. A very happy and contented baby,
 16 she was growing up surrounded with love. At 3 weeks old
 17 she smiled her first proper smile, a smile that lit up
 18 her face with a warmth that everyone was drawn to. She
 19 loved her big brothers to bits and grew from their
 20 annoying little sister into one they dearly loved.
 21 Always keen to learn new things as she grew, she
 22 eagerly embraced anything that came her way. From her
 23 first steps, learning to tie her shoelaces or riding her
 24 bike, she would persevere relentlessly until she had
 25 mastered it.

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1 Starting school was a delight to Nell, not only
 2 learning but making new friends. This was something
 3 that became very important to her. If you were a friend
 4 of Nell's, you were in good hands. She hated any form
 5 of unkindness and she would protect her friends to the
 6 hilt.
 7 She took to school like a duck to water from
 8 preschool to primary and then on to secondary. She
 9 soaked up everything that was taught like a sponge. She
 10 excelled in English and in maths and was placed on the
 11 gifted and talented register. In Year 9 she took part
 12 in the national school Kangaroo maths challenge and was
 13 awarded gold. Although she excelled at school, she was
 14 always very modest about her ability and always thought
 15 of others as being far cleverer than her.
 16 I would now like to read some comments that have
 17 been kindly written by some of her teachers.
 18 Mrs Bebbington, who was her primary teacher, wrote:
 19 "Nell was a truly perfect primary pupil. Every day
 20 she came into school with that fabulous smile and
 21 infectious giggle bustling down the corridor with her
 22 friends, ready to embrace each day. She was always keen
 23 to learn new things, putting effort and energy into
 24 everything she did. Nell was just a sheer delight to
 25 teach, excelling as a learner. Having a quiet

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1 confidence in her own abilities led her to have the
 2 determination and motivation to do well. She always
 3 took pride in her achievements and was a fabulous role
 4 model for others to look up to.
 5 "Nell was a wonderfully talented young girl showing
 6 an aptitude for so many things. She was a great reader
 7 and writer and a very gifted mathematician who relished
 8 in the opportunity to be challenged. Where other
 9 children found difficulties, Nell was always there for
 10 them, offering support and encouragement. She was
 11 a friend to everyone.
 12 "It was on the stage where everyone saw Nell really
 13 shine: Nell loved entertaining others. With her bright,
 14 bubbly, vibrant personality, she put heart and soul into
 15 every performance she did, giving 'her' audience plenty
 16 to remember.
 17 "When she transferred to high school everyone who
 18 had known her knew she had a bright future. Although
 19 her destiny has sadly not been realised, Nell's life at
 20 Byley Primary School is remembered with such fond
 21 memories and affection. Her legacy continues to inspire
 22 and encourage those who follow in her footsteps."
 23 David Wheeler, who was Nell's form tutor, wrote:
 24 "Nell was a lovely girl who was so popular in her
 25 tutor family. She had such a positive and cheerful

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1 manner and she encouraged others to feel the same way.
 2 Nell is still greatly missed and I am so saddened when
 3 I often think about how much she would have enjoyed her
 4 A levels that she would have been side studying this
 5 year. I also wonder what she might have gone on to
 6 achieve and what a loss it is to us, to her family and
 7 to the community."
 8 Nell's English teacher wrote:
 9 "As Nell's English teacher I always knew she loved
 10 the subject, especially when given the chance to write
 11 stories or analyse poems, two things she was very good
 12 at. But my overriding memories of Nell don't have
 13 anything to do with English specifically. When
 14 I remember Nell, I remember a student who always seemed
 15 to be smiling, I remember a teenager with a wicked sense
 16 of humour, I remember a human being with a big heart.
 17 "Nell knew how to get the most from school. She
 18 worked hard and surrounded herself with friends who had
 19 the same work ethic and the same thirst for life. These
 20 qualities would have undoubtedly taken Nell far.
 21 Unfortunately, we will never know just how far."
 22 Nell's drama teacher:
 23 "Seeing Nell come into the theatre for her drama
 24 lessons, I was met with a quiet and studious young lady
 25 with a big smile who behaved with a real maturity.

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1 Teaching the class for the first time we had worked on
 2 small skills leading up to mid-term assessed
 3 performances. I often expect that studious and mature
 4 students sometimes struggle with confidence in
 5 performing; how wrong I was in this case. I remember
 6 doing the double take as I saw Nell perform. She
 7 immediately brought energy and enthusiasm to her role
 8 and stood out completely as a talented and charismatic
 9 young lady who grabbed the attention of the class.
 10 "I remember one boy who had not prepared or put much
 11 effort in sitting with his mouth wide open and leaning
 12 over to his mate saying, 'She's well good.' The bar had
 13 been set.
 14 "Nell's passion, enthusiasm and talent will stay
 15 with me forever and I feel privileged to have been part
 16 of her journey through school. Her big heart was
 17 matched with a big personality and some big talent."
 18 Nell's music teacher said:
 19 "Nell immersed herself in school life, whether it be
 20 in the classroom or enjoying extracurricular activities.
 21 As Nell's music teacher I remember a creative
 22 hard-working student who always went the extra mile.
 23 I can still see her now laughing at an imaginary radio
 24 show they were making in one of her last lessons, and I
 25 will always remember Nell joining Young Voices in

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1 Year 7.
 2 "She stood out at a star right from the start and
 3 I'm delighted she performed with us on so many
 4 occasions. With a smile and a quiet confidence that lit
 5 up any stage, a wonderful, caring young girl with an
 6 infectious smile. A real loss to our HCCS community."
 7 Although Nell enjoyed the educational side of school
 8 it was friendships she formed while she was there that
 9 meant the most to her. She had a wide circle of friends
 10 and always seemed to have something unique in common
 11 with each them, ensuring they were important, even if
 12 she wasn't able to spend lots of time with them. But it
 13 was her close friendship group with whom she spent most
 14 of her time. Nell, Olivia, Alex and Anais were always
 15 together in school, inside or out, a group of young
 16 girls who really enjoyed each other's company. We know
 17 how deeply Nell's loss has affected them and we asked
 18 them if they would write a few words about her and
 19 we would like to share them with you today.
 20 Olivia, who was Nell's best friend, wrote:
 21 "Nell and I were the very best of friends. I met
 22 her at primary school. I was in Year 1 and Nell was in
 23 reception. I knew from the first time I saw her when
 24 she came in for her pre-starting school visit that
 25 we would be friends. I will never forget the day she

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1 came running into our classroom. She was so excited to
 2 be starting school she couldn't stop smiling.
 3 "Throughout our primary school years we spent every
 4 other year in the same classroom, with our primary
 5 school being such a small school the year groups were
 6 mixed. Even when we weren't in the same classroom Nell
 7 would always spend her lunchtimes and break times with
 8 me and my group of friends and this continued through
 9 high school, even though Nell was in the year below.
 10 "When school finished we would wait for each other
 11 and walk back to where our mums waited for us. Nell was
 12 the best friend anyone could ever have wished for. She
 13 was kind and thoughtful, always thinking about how she
 14 could help anyone out who was upset or in trouble. She
 15 was very confident too. I was the shy one but Nell give
 16 me the confidence that I now have. We shared the same
 17 wicked sense of humour and there were times when we
 18 didn't have to say a word to each other, we would just
 19 look at each other and burst out laughing. No one else
 20 would understand but we knew.
 21 "After school we would spend hours on FaceTime
 22 planning our next outing or talking about what happened
 23 at school that day. She always made me laugh because
 24 our chats would always end with her saying that she had
 25 to go because she hadn't tidied her room.

8

1 "We loved our outings to Tatton Park and our endless
2 shopping trips where we would try on the most hideous
3 outfits and then take a group photo of us in them, and
4 at the end of the school term we would all go out to our
5 favourite place to eat.

6 "Nell was the fun one in our group and between us
7 we were always arranging our next outing or shopping
8 trip. We shared so much over the years growing up
9 together: our hopes, our dreams, and we had so many
10 plans for the future. We were going to visit
11 Harry Potter World -- she was a huge fan -- in Florida,
12 travel the world, but before all that, once she had
13 passed her driving test, she hoped she would have a mint
14 green Fiat 500 that she hoped she could take us all
15 shopping in.

16 "As a group of friends, we made so many happy
17 memories. One that I remember vividly is when we went
18 ice skating, which she wasn't very good at, and I made
19 her let go of the penguin she thought she was holding on
20 to and she slid into the centre of the ice rink.
21 Whenever we went on a shopping trip, she was always the
22 one with the most bags.

23 "Nell and I had one of those rare connections that
24 gave us such a fantastic friendship. She was the one
25 I would call when I needed to talk, who knew my

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1 thoughts, who I could laugh with over absolutely
2 anything and I miss her sense of humour more than anyone
3 will ever know.

4 "If I searched the world over I would never find a
5 friend as loyal, caring, funny or as full of life as
6 Nell was. She was one in a million and she will live in
7 my heart forever. One word to describe her as a friend
8 is irreplaceable and no one will ever come close; Nell
9 will be my best friend forever."

10 Her other friend, Alex, wrote:

11 "The loss of Nell in our lives has been the biggest
12 heartache I have ever experienced. A friendship with
13 Nell meant so much. She was vibrant, outgoing and
14 always there for every else. Nell was so beautiful,
15 intelligent and organised too. She enjoyed anything she
16 was thrown into from maths, dance or drama to knowledge
17 of current fashions to holiday planning to what we
18 thought was a wide future ahead of us.

19 "This is one of the things I find most upsetting.
20 I had never met a girl who was so passionate and
21 positive about life and what exciting times we had to
22 look forward to when we were older. Nell loved to talk
23 about A levels, partying, wedding dresses and children.
24 I thought to myself often: is there anything this girl
25 can't do or know?

10

1 "We threw ourselves into most things whenever we
2 could. Nell always gave me the courage to try something
3 new as she was so enthusiastic: we went ice skating,
4 watched horror movies, experienced the Christmas
5 markets, had picnics in the park, went to the cinema and
6 then joined our local Young Farmers' Club at the start
7 of 2017, a reason to laugh some more. We made new
8 friends together and told each other that we'd attend
9 every social competition and party we could.

10 "Now I see myself getting closer to these times
11 I see gaps when I'm out where Nell should be. She
12 should be here with us with her contagious smile. Times
13 such as leaving school, the release of Mamma Mia 2,
14 getting my first boyfriend, and turning 18, all leading
15 to some late evenings filled with music and laughter.
16 That was right up Nell's street.

17 "Our little loving friendship group and I have never
18 been happier. Weekends were centred around shopping
19 trips where we would buy matching clothes and new
20 make-up and then style our buys perfectly for our
21 birthday meals out. I could never have imagined the
22 death of our small village girl who grew up on a family
23 turkey farm to be associated with world new headlines.
24 I feel very honoured to be able to tell people I knew
25 Nell, now a well-known name, on such a personal level.

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1 I'll be sure that my memories of our last lunchtime
2 goodbyes on that tragic day never fade and I will
3 continue to celebrate her birthdays for years to come
4 at the fabulous Remembering Nell Foundation balls.

5 "I'll try my best to live out Nell's plans for us
6 that she never could, whether that was our Young
7 Farmers' competition we were preparing for in the last
8 week or dancing the night away for many years to come."

9 I would like to thank Nell's friends for those kind
10 words.

11 Away from school life, Nell enjoyed many things from
12 ballet, contemporary dance, to musical theatre and the
13 fun of the local Zumba class. Along with her friends
14 she would enjoy them all, but one of her favourites was
15 becoming a member of Knutsford Young Farmers'. She had
16 joined along with her friend Alex and had great fun
17 helping to judge some sheep in a competition, later
18 informing us that if we ever wanted to buy a sheep she
19 now knew exactly what qualities to look for. She loved
20 to be around people and to be part of and the Young
21 Farmers suited her down to the ground.

22 She also loved music, her favourite artists being
23 Adele and Ed Sheeran, after buying his Divide album,
24 which would be played during each school run. She would
25 never admit to it, but she also loved a bit of northern

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1 soul, "Do I Love You" by Frank Wilson and "Our Love Will
 2 Grow" by The Showmen being two of her favourites.
 3 At home she loved to bake, cupcakes being her forte,
 4 the thicker the icing and more elaborate the design, the
 5 better. Her baking was done with the assurance that
 6 she'd wash up when she'd finished. Needless to say, the
 7 bowls, spoons and whatever she'd used remained in the
 8 sink to the declaration, "I'm a bit tired now so I'll do
 9 it later". Of course, this was left to mum.
 10 Like a lot of teenage girls, she loved fashion and
 11 make-up. For her 14th birthday she asked if she could
 12 have clothes; a trip to New Look ensued, mum being the
 13 clothes caddy, back and forth to the changing rooms with
 14 an array of different sizes and styles. The mistake was
 15 made to include a rather high wedge sandal, just to try
 16 on with her outfit of course. Needless to say, after
 17 lots of pleading how she really, really loved them and
 18 really, really needed them, they came home with her.
 19 The competition then began between her and her friends
 20 to see who could actually walk in the heels the best.
 21 As a family we miss her so much. She lit up our
 22 days with her youthful energy and her passion for life.
 23 Every day was an adventure for Nell and we were all
 24 carried along with her. The thought of the years ahead
 25 without her in our lives is truly unbearable and I have

1 no words to describe the pain and grief that we feel
 2 each day, but those 14 wonderful years that we all
 3 shared together and the memories we made were truly
 4 special. We love Nell with all of our hearts and we
 5 always will.
 6 MR GREANEY: Thank you, Sam.
 7 Mr Wilson, would you now please play the
 8 presentation of photographs of Nell. {INQ035427/1}
 9 (Photographs shown to the inquiry)
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Jones, you started by thanking us;
 11 there was no need. It's for us to thank you for reading
 12 the tribute and to all those who contributed to it. All
 13 of your family have every reason to be so proud of Nell.
 14 What comes over most strongly is the sense of loss that
 15 everyone feels at her death and my overwhelming
 16 impression is: what a waste.
 17 Mr Greaney.
 18 MR GREANEY: Sir, we'd now invite you to rise and we'll
 19 return at 11.00.
 20 (10.00 am)
 21 (A short break)
 22 (11.07 am)
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Greaney.
 24 MR GREANEY: Sir, thank you. This is the pen portrait of
 25 Michelle Kiss, prepared by her husband, Tony, and other

1 family and friends.
 2 Present within the hearing room are Tony, Michelle's
 3 parents, Mick and Christine, Dylan, the son of Michelle
 4 and Tony, and Mark Dickson, a very close friend of the
 5 family. Many other family members and friends are
 6 watching our proceedings remotely.
 7 Mark Dickson will read out the tribute to
 8 Michelle -- in fact I've said tribute, but what I mean
 9 to say is tributes, because we will hear tributes from
 10 Tony, Mick and Christine, Michelle's sister, Nichola,
 11 Michelle's auntie and godmother, Janet, and from other
 12 family and friends as well.
 13 As Mark reads out the tributes, a photograph of
 14 Michelle will appear on the screen. I should add that
 15 the tributes have been prepared deliberately so as to
 16 avoid the naming of the daughter of Michelle and Tony,
 17 and we fully expect that the press will respect that
 18 decision.
 19 Once Mark has read out those tributes,
 20 a presentation of photographs of Michelle and her family
 21 will be shown on the screen. It's accompanied by two
 22 songs: "Rule the World" by Take That and "The Dance" by
 23 Garth Brooks.
 24 Sir, I'm now going to invite Mark to stand when,
 25 Mark, you're ready, and first of all Mark will read out

1 a tribute from Tony Kiss, Michelle's husband.
 2 Pen portrait of MICHELLE KISS
 3 MARK DICKSON: Tony would like me to thank the legal team,
 4 before I start, at Hogan Lovells. Tony's found them
 5 a great support and he much appreciates everything they
 6 have done for him.
 7 Michelle Kiss was born on 29 July 1971. She was
 8 only 45 years old when she died. She was the daughter
 9 of Christine and Mick, and she was the older sister to
 10 Nichola. In the early 80s, the family moved to Lammack
 11 on the outskirts of Blackburn. Michelle loved and
 12 embraced life and she had hobbies that led to new
 13 friendships, which gave her an independence that would
 14 stand her in good stead for her whole life.
 15 Michelle had always been my guiding light from the
 16 very first moment I met her. She was just 15 when
 17 a mutual friend played Cupid to Michelle and I.
 18 I worked on the fish market on Saturdays, and I'd been
 19 told that Michelle was going to walk past the stall to
 20 check me out. I may have had a burst of ego on show
 21 that day as I think I overbusied myself behind the
 22 stall, wanting to make a good impression.
 23 Our mutual friend had set up our chance meeting and
 24 thumbs up were given from both of us and a date was duly
 25 arranged. Michelle would be smiling if she was

1 listening to this. Being something of a fashion victim,
 2 I'd spent a lot of time getting ready. So cool as
 3 a cucumber in my trendy pants of the day, my Farah's,
 4 I set off to meet Michelle. On the way, though,
 5 I slipped in some mud and fell. I was horrified,
 6 totally dishevelled. I looked down at my Farah pants,
 7 covered in dirt, and I knew I couldn't go on a date in
 8 such a state, so I stood her up. This was before mobile
 9 phones and I had no way of getting in touch with my
 10 beautiful Michelle. I thought I'd blown it, but fate
 11 was having none of that and Cupid, in the form of our
 12 mutual friend, intervened once again and the date was
 13 re-arranged for the following Monday.

14 I remember it all as if it were yesterday.
 15 Michelle's beautiful smile always made her face light
 16 up. I remember how happy I felt and that was the start
 17 of a beautiful story of friendship, growing into our
 18 very own love story.

19 In 1994, Michelle and I bought our first house
 20 together. It took a year to renovate, and every penny
 21 we had too, but it was ours. All our hard work paid off
 22 when we spent our first Christmas together in the winter
 23 of 1995 as Mr and Mrs Kiss. We had just been married on
 24 the beaches of Barbados. What a special time we shared
 25 with close family and friends, and Gary and Wendy got

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1 married too.

2 We loved our new home and Michelle was a natural
 3 homemaker. I think she may have had our whole lives
 4 planned out because that's how Michelle was: always
 5 thinking of the next thing for us to do, either with
 6 just the two of us or with family and friends. She
 7 loved life and she wanted to make every day count.
 8 I think that came from her natural ability to bring
 9 people together.

10 That made Michelle stand out amongst her friends
 11 because she always seemed to have an aura of love and
 12 positivity that glowed with each of her smiles.
 13 Michelle had an excellent eye for colour and design when
 14 it came to furnishing our home. We even got a pet
 15 kitten: he was a tabby and we called him Whiskey.
 16 I often wonder what the neighbours must have thought
 17 when I was shouting for him to come in at night;
 18 Michelle was always concerned about that.

19 It wasn't long after our marriage in the summer 1996
 20 that I returned home from work one evening and found
 21 Michelle waiting for me nervously. I could sense there
 22 was something to say, but she didn't waiver and she
 23 said, "I'm pregnant." She then waited for my reaction,
 24 which was one of shock because I didn't see it coming.
 25 I should have known, I suppose, but now there was a new

18

1 life joining us and it did just take a moment to sink
 2 in.

3 We cuddled up at the bottom step of our stairs.
 4 I asked her how she felt but I could see in her
 5 sparkling eyes that in that moment right then she was
 6 the happiest woman on earth. I felt pure happiness too,
 7 overwhelmed even. These are such vivid and treasured
 8 memories.

9 So it was 10 am on a sunny Sunday morning, on
 10 12 January 1997, that our lovely son Dylan was born.
 11 We were proud new parents. Michelle was so happy. On
 12 17 January 2000, we were blessed again with the birth of
 13 our second son, Elliott. Again, Michelle was so happy
 14 with all her boys. In 2004, Michelle gave birth to our
 15 baby girl weighing 7 pounds, 7 ounces. This completed
 16 Michelle's brood: her very own little girl. She was so
 17 happy. We were so happy. We were the proudest of
 18 parents.

19 It seemed from the moment we met to the moments my
 20 children were born that we had been building the edges
 21 of our family picture. Now our family was complete. We
 22 knew we had an exciting lifetime ahead of us all and we
 23 wanted to fill it with so many more beautiful memories.
 24 We were all so happy.

25 Over the years Michelle visited Manchester Arena

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1 many times with our children to watch so many concerts
 2 and events. This included seeing her favourite band,
 3 Take That, six times. How sad to think that a place
 4 that brought so much joy to my family would be the place
 5 forever to take away that joy.

6 We understand Michelle died instantly at 10.31 pm on
 7 22 May 2017 when a bomb exploded in the foyer of the
 8 arena. On that fateful night Michelle was just waiting
 9 for our daughter, she was just being a mum. Michelle
 10 died, but somehow my daughter survived, amazingly, and
 11 so, so thankfully she was physically unscathed.
 12 However, the horrors she must have witnessed in the
 13 aftermath of the explosion are fully known only to
 14 herself.

15 I like to believe though that in their last moments
 16 together, she brought some comfort to her mum. I also
 17 like to think of her at the moment of their parting as
 18 her mum's little guardian angel, because I know that
 19 Michelle became her guardian angel in that very same
 20 moment. This episode has left my family and I with what
 21 I describe as an emptiness, a place where Michelle
 22 should actually be, but she isn't. And this is an
 23 emptiness that Michelle could actually fill, but we know
 24 she can't.

25 So this moment threw my life and my children's lives

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1 into a darkness that I feared would last an eternity .
 2 And unless you've lived this life , it 's impossible for
 3 another to know. It 's impossible to imagine the
 4 unwanted reality that takes over your life after the
 5 sudden, tragic and shocking loss of someone you love so
 6 much, someone who has played such an enormously pivotal
 7 part of your life for 30 years . She became my
 8 girlfriend , my childhood sweetheart, my wife, my friend ,
 9 my soulmate.

10 I know the beautiful memories we did create together
 11 as a family will forever be treasured , and they've
 12 really helped us all , even in our darkest moments.
 13 These memories do provide real moments of comfort, but
 14 sadness comes when we realise there can be no more with
 15 Michelle .

16 So I'm now mum and dad and I'm doing my best, but
 17 I worry that it can't ever be good enough. How can it
 18 ever be good enough for my children without their mum,
 19 without Michelle? How can it be?

20 But I'll never stop loving my children or Michelle
 21 and I'll never stop doing my best for each of them, and
 22 never stop trying . They were always our first priority
 23 and they will continue to be mine. I'm so sorry this
 24 has happened to them, to us. It 's not fair .

25 We've all lost so much: I've lost my wife, my

21

1 children have lost their mum, Christine and Mick have
 2 lost their daughter. I just can't imagine how they
 3 feel . Our families have lost a member and our friends
 4 have lost a friend , a good friend too.

5 Michelle 's memory will always live on in all our
 6 hearts. I know the life skills she taught our children
 7 and the love she gave them in her life will live on in
 8 my children. I'm also sure Michelle 's love will endure
 9 and her blood will beat in the hearts of my children 's
 10 children too. Yet to be born, they will never meet
 11 their maternal grandmother, of course, but they will
 12 know of her and they will learn how special she was.
 13 We will certainly tell them Michelle 's beautiful story .

14 Many thoughts do give me comfort and these lovely
 15 memories somehow provide an inner strength for me each
 16 day because I know Michelle will be watching over us all
 17 and I know this is what she wants me to do and I'll do
 18 it .

19 She would be so proud to watch our two sons, Dylan
 20 and Elliott , cement their place in this world and our
 21 beautiful daughter too. She's amazing. My children
 22 inspire me every day with their love and their drive in
 23 everything they do. This is exactly the same love and
 24 drive that Michelle was blessed with and I'm so grateful
 25 that it endures in them. That part of their lives

22

1 didn't fall silent on that fateful night.

2 A day doesn't pass by when I don't think about my
 3 beautiful Michelle and my children also think about
 4 their mum. We all wish that Michelle were with us here
 5 today. There's a hurt somewhere deep inside my heart
 6 because I know I'll never see her again and I miss her
 7 smile, I miss her voice, but most of all , I miss her
 8 beautiful presence and her warm embrace. I just miss
 9 everything about her and this is my biggest loss .

10 I know she will always be in our hearts wherever we
 11 go, but I do wish I could have grown old with my
 12 Michelle. I've lost that wish. I wish we could have
 13 watched together as our children grew older and reached
 14 out into the world. Sadly, I know that can never be,
 15 but I will always try to ensure that our children seize
 16 the opportunities that life offers , just like their
 17 mother did. Michelle Kiss: just saying her name breaks
 18 my heart because I know so many beautiful moments from
 19 our futures have been taken away from us all .

20 The bomb just didn't destroy the lives of 22 people
 21 in the arena that night, it changed the lives of every
 22 family member that lost a loved one. They know what
 23 I mean. It damaged those who were injured and their
 24 families , and many more people present and not present
 25 on the night who were also affected so deeply.

23

1 As I conclude, I would like to thank the emergency
 2 services who in the midst of such chaos showed such
 3 sensitivity and true professionalism in dealing with
 4 these horrors . The aftermath of this abhorrent act of
 5 terrorism affected many people, including members of the
 6 emergency services . I take great comfort knowing that
 7 my beautiful Michelle 's broken body was taken from the
 8 arena so respectfully and I know she travelled at
 9 funeral pace to the morgue. This was a beautiful and
 10 important act of love and respect for her and
 11 I appreciate that so much. I always will .

12 These moments of love and respect were magnified
 13 somehow in the following days by the coming together of
 14 the people of Manchester in the way they did and in the
 15 way they do. They demonstrated in the most incredible
 16 way that choosing love can be the more powerful force .
 17 For this I say thank you to the wonderful Manchester
 18 people for restoring my faith in humanity during the
 19 hardest time of my life .

20 MR GREANEY: Mark will now read the tribute from Michelle's
 21 parents, Mick and Christine .

22 MARK DICKSON: Our precious daughter Michelle was born on
 23 29 July 1971 at Chorley and District Hospital in
 24 Chorley. She weighed in at 5 pounds and 10 ounces.
 25 Michelle was a happy and content baby. She very seldom

24

1 cried and was always smiling .
 2 Though Michelle was quite shy as a child , she loved
 3 being with other children , friends , neighbours and
 4 cousins . When she was 17 months old, Michelle's sister
 5 Nichola was born. We chose a home birth because her due
 6 date was close to Christmas and we didn't want to be
 7 separated at Christmastime. Nichola was indeed born on
 8 Christmas Eve.

9 Michelle came upstairs and on these steps she said ,
 10 "Baby, baby." She burst into the bedroom with a big
 11 smile on her face. We lifted her on to the bed and
 12 placed her baby sister on to her lap. That's when the
 13 special bond between them was formed. They were
 14 inseparable all through childhood, their teenage years
 15 and adulthood, with both going on each other's
 16 honeymoons.

17 Michelle was a loving , caring and thoughtful
 18 daughter, the hub of our family . We have so many happy
 19 memories of Michelle who was so family- orientated . She
 20 was not only our daughter, but also our best friend .

21 She looked forward to our family gatherings and
 22 celebrations , of which there were many. Michelle had
 23 many friends, both in and out of school , with whom she
 24 always kept in contact. In 1981, we moved from Leyland
 25 to Blackburn. Michelle soon made new friends and

25

1 settled into her new school.

2 When she was 15 years old, she met her
 3 husband-to-be, Tony. They became inseparable.

4 On leaving school, Michelle started work at the
 5 Department of Social Security in Blackburn, where she
 6 stayed until the birth of her children .

7 She married Tony in Barbados on 23 November 1995,
 8 with 12 family members attending the wedding. She
 9 looked absolutely beautiful . On returning from
 10 Barbados, they moved into their first home.

11 In January 1997, their son Dylan was born. You
 12 could see immediately the love she had for him. In the
 13 year 2000, their second son, Elliott , was born. And to
 14 complete the family , in 2004 a daughter was born.

15 Michelle was a devoted mother who absolutely loved
 16 her children beyond measure. Michelle supported them
 17 totally throughout their education and their activities .
 18 She followed the boys through all their interests , their
 19 football , karate and basketball . She drove thousands of
 20 miles and spent hours taking her youngest to the Stage
 21 Box Academy in Manchester, driving to auditions and
 22 rehearsals . She was so proud when she got parts in
 23 Annie and White Christmas at the Liverpool Empire
 24 Theatre and Wind in the Willows at the Lowry Theatre,
 25 Manchester. In 2018 she also got a part in a Hollywood

26

1 movie being filmed on location in Cognac in France. She
 2 said, "This is for you, mum." She was sure her mum was
 3 there with her.

4 On the night of 22 May 2017, when we were told of
 5 the cowardly and evil act, and that our precious and
 6 beautiful daughter had been taken from us, our lives
 7 changed forever, our world fell apart. The grief and
 8 sorrow was unbearable. Michelle is in our hearts and
 9 minds day and night. We have to take each day one at
 10 a time, knowing every day as we wake is another day
 11 without our daughter. We'll never come to terms with
 12 our loss .

13 We love and miss you so much, Michelle. Our family
 14 chain is broken. Our lives will never be the same, but
 15 as God takes us one by one, our chain will link again .
 16 Michelle , we love you forever . Mum and dad.

17 MR GREANEY: Mark will now read a tribute from Nichola,
 18 Michelle's sister .

19 MARK DICKSON: Michelle was the best friend, sister and
 20 auntie that anyone could wish for . She was always
 21 bubbly and she always had a smile on her face. Michelle
 22 always looked for the good in everyone. We shared many
 23 good times and holidays together , including each other's
 24 honeymoons. Later, as families , we had lots of laughs
 25 and giggles over the years .

27

1 Michelle's kind heart and gentle , caring nature was
 2 noted by everyone who knew and met her. She's very much
 3 loved and greatly missed by us all each and every day.
 4 She is loved and remembered every day.

5 Your loving sister , Nichola, your niece, Ellis , and
 6 your nephew, Ethan.

7 MR GREANEY: Next, we'll hear Mark read a tribute from
 8 Janet, Michelle's auntie and godmother.

9 MARK DICKSON: Michelle was a happy and shy young girl,
 10 typically hiding behind the settee when very young to
 11 sing A Christmas Carol, even then not seeking the
 12 limelight . She was completely self - effacing , but cared
 13 so much for others .

14 Family meant everything to Michelle . She made sure
 15 that her three much-loved children's christenings were
 16 memorable events and she invited the wider family to
 17 celebrate with them. Family occasions were cherished .
 18 When her 96-year-old grandmother was in hospital in
 19 2016, Michelle insisted on being kept in the loop. True
 20 to her word, when the call came, she along with her
 21 sister , Nichola, rushed to the hospital to be with her.
 22 Then, on what would have been her grandma's birthday,
 23 in February 2017 she contacted us to see how we were.
 24 This was Michelle being her caring self as usual .

25 What happened in the arena was the complete

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1 antithesis of Michelle's and her family's values. Grief
 2 is now a constant in our lives and the enormity of her
 3 absence will always be with us.
 4 MR GREANEY: We will now hear the tribute of Gary, Wendy and
 5 Lewis. Gary is Michelle's cousin.
 6 MARK DICKSON: Where to start to tell you about Michelle?
 7 She was beautiful inside and out with the biggest heart.
 8 Cousin, best friend, auntie and godmother to our son,
 9 Lewis, Michelle was a huge part of our family and our
 10 lives. We all have many treasured memories of our time
 11 together. We were married in Barbados together and we
 12 had the most amazing time.
 13 Memories of all the wonderful things we did together
 14 from holidays, days out and sleepovers at each other's
 15 houses, always having fun and lots of laughs. Our
 16 children grew up together and are very close cousins,
 17 which is wonderful to see.
 18 I asked our son, Lewis, to tell me about Auntie
 19 Michelle. He said words cannot describe how much he
 20 misses her and how much she meant to him. He went on to
 21 say:
 22 "Auntie Michelle was amazing. She always made me
 23 feel special and she supported everything I did and
 24 I knew how much she loved me. It was a privilege to
 25 have her in my life."

29

1 My name is Wendy and Michelle was my best friend,
 2 the best friend I could have wished for. I miss her so
 3 much. Very often I go to pick the phone up for one of
 4 our wonderful chats; she always knew how to cheer me up
 5 and make me feel better. I cannot describe how much
 6 I miss her. I was so lucky to have Michelle in my life
 7 and I feel very blessed. I still cannot believe she's
 8 not here. It's so hard to think about the cruel way she
 9 was taken from us all.
 10 My name is Gary and I am Michelle's cousin. She was
 11 also a wonderful friend to me and my family and we loved
 12 her dearly. I have so many happy memories of us growing
 13 up together, sharing lots of lovely family times,
 14 especially at Christmas. For 23 years we've done lots
 15 of things with our children together, and having that
 16 time is so precious and it cannot be replaced.
 17 The impact of losing Michelle has been so difficult
 18 to comprehend. Our lives will never be the same without
 19 her.
 20 MR GREANEY: Mark will now read a message from Auntie Marie,
 21 Uncle Graham, Sharon and Lee, and their families.
 22 MARK DICKSON: Our beloved niece and cousin, Michelle, lived
 23 a life of love and caring every day. So may the winds
 24 of heaven blow softly and whisper in your ear how much
 25 we love and miss you and wish that you were here.

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1 MR GREANEY: Finally, we'll hear messages from a number of
 2 family friends.
 3 MARK DICKSON: From Jay and Tracey. How do you put
 4 something so special into a few words? Michelle to us
 5 was the epitome of kindness and caring, with the
 6 strongest sense of family. She always put others first,
 7 always seeing the best in everyone. A true animal lover
 8 too, especially with Elvis and Rocco. She was a very
 9 special lady.
 10 From Angela and Bernie. In Michelle, we have lost
 11 one of our dearest friends. Such a caring, gentle and
 12 loving person and a fantastic mum. The family was
 13 at the centre of everything she did. She was so kind
 14 and caring towards my children, too. Nothing was too
 15 much trouble for her. She treated everyone with such
 16 generosity, always willing to organise holidays, trips
 17 and parties together. We have memories to cherish
 18 forever, but there should have been so many more. Words
 19 cannot express the devastating loss of Michelle and our
 20 lives will never be the same again.
 21 From Debbie. Michelle was my best friend. She was
 22 loyal, kind, fun-loving, easy-going, happy, beautiful
 23 inside and out. Our children grew up together and we
 24 shared many happy family memories, for which I am truly
 25 grateful. I miss her and I think of her every day and

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1 my life is worse for not having her in it. She loved
 2 her family above everything else and her life revolved
 3 around them. It is devastating that she has been taken
 4 away from them so cruelly. Michelle was caring and
 5 thoughtful and always put others before herself. I am
 6 blessed to have known her. She made my life better by
 7 being a part of it.
 8 From Nina. Michelle was a beautiful and loyal
 9 friend, both to myself and my children. We all miss her
 10 dearly. We met through our children and we had many fun
 11 experiences together. In particular, our great days and
 12 nights out in Manchester, especially at Christmas. She
 13 was one of the friendliest, sweetest, humblest and the
 14 most unassuming person I have ever known. In all the
 15 time I knew Michelle, I don't think I ever heard her
 16 moan or complain about anything. The positivity was
 17 contagious and she never had a wrong word to say about
 18 anyone. She was a true angel, a beautiful angel inside
 19 and out.
 20 From Caroline. I met Michelle in the school
 21 playground. I remember looking at how happy and chatty
 22 she looked and how popular she was with the teachers,
 23 parents and children. Everybody loved Michelle. She
 24 was the role model mum that everyone looked up to. She
 25 was calming and she always saw the best in people. She

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1 always joined in all the school events, helping out at
2 the annual summer fair with her role being the face
3 painter. All the kids loved her as she had so much
4 patience. Michelle made the most out of every occasion:
5 at Easter, putting on egg hunts for all the children,
6 decorating the house at Halloween, and she'd always have
7 lots of treats.

8 Our girls loved to put on singing and dancing shows
9 for us. We all loved the Disney films. I cherish the
10 times we spent together, and with our families, and feel
11 blessed for the memories we made.

12 Finally, from my wife, Nikki. I met Michelle
13 through our sons' friendship and then we started to
14 spend time together with our families. These times were
15 always full of fun and laughter. I also loved the times
16 when Michelle and I just chatted together in each
17 other's homes or on the phone. She was a good friend to
18 talk to, great listener, completely trustworthy.
19 I really valued that part of our friendship and I still
20 miss those chats. The love Michelle had for her family
21 was the most important part of her life.

22 But I also know her love and her selflessness was
23 felt by so many other people too. We were truly blessed
24 to have known Michelle and to have had her
25 thoughtfulness and her kindness touch our lives.

1 Thank you.

2 MR GREANEY: Mr Wilson, I'm going to ask, please, that you
3 now play the presentation of photographs accompanied by
4 music. {INQ035903/1}

5 (Photographs shown to the inquiry)

6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you, Mr Dickson, for reading those
7 tributes so movingly and thank you to Tony Kiss for
8 sharing such personal memories with us, and to her
9 parents, relatives and other friends for telling us of
10 their loss.

11 Mr Kiss, you have lost a wonderful wife and your
12 children have lost a devoted mother, the most important
13 person, together with you, in their lives.

14 You have described to us a very happy family life,
15 now brutally cut short. The effect on your lives has
16 been truly devastating. As you say, it is impossible
17 for us to fully understand the devastation, but you have
18 given us some insight and you are certainly correct when
19 you say it isn't fair.

20 Mr Greaney.

21 MR GREANEY: Sir, we will rise now and return to the hearing
22 room at 1 pm.
23 (11.54 am)

24 (A short break)

25 (1.00 pm)

1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Greaney.

2 MR GREANEY: Sir, good afternoon. This is the pen portrait
3 of Elaine McIver prepared by her parents, Patricia and
4 Frank, and sister, Lynda.

5 The family and friends will be watching the
6 proceedings remotely and I am asked to mention in
7 particular: Elaine's nieces, Sammy and Nicki, who were
8 treated by Elaine as her very own children; Elaine's
9 brother Paul and Paul's wife, Paula; and Elaine's
10 brother-in-law, Carl Morris.

11 The tribute takes the form of a video recording
12 during the course of which Lynda introduces
13 a compilation of photographs of Elaine. And in the
14 course of the recording a song is played "Clocks" by
15 Coldplay.

16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.

17 MR GREANEY: So Mr Wilson, would you please play the
18 recording. {INQ035719/1}

19 Pen portrait of ELAINE McIVER

20 "Hi, I'm Elaine McIver's sister, Lynda.

21 "Elaine was my little sister. I was born 5 years
22 before she came into the world. Do a pen portrait, they
23 said. We weren't initially going to do a pen portrait
24 because Elaine was a very private person and she
25 wouldn't have liked having all her information told

1 publicly, so we decided we wouldn't do one. But then,
2 we thought, well, we might regret not saying something
3 on her behalf and if anyone should say anything, it
4 should be us as her family. We were around from the
5 minute she was born, obviously, and she was very much
6 loved and very much a massive, pivotal part of our
7 family.

8 "So how do you begin to talk about someone who was
9 such a big part of your life? Well, the thing is, you
10 don't, you just can't. You just can't say in a short
11 period of time what somebody meant to you and how much
12 they meant to you and how much she loved us and how much
13 we loved her.

14 "So instead of saying something, as the old saying
15 goes, a picture says a thousand words, and I hope that
16 this little presentation of photographs from our family
17 album will give just a little bit of a taste of the
18 character that Elaine was and the attitude that she had
19 and her lust for life and the way she was just a cheeky
20 little girl from the minute she was born.

21 "I hope her personality comes across in these
22 pictures. I hope you notice all her little body
23 language poses and all the different things because that
24 was Elaine and she just embraced life. She was gusto
25 and gung-ho and just a joy to be around and she just

1 would hate to be remembered as a victim. I hope these
 2 pictures just show a little bit of the life that she led
 3 with her family and how we believe that she would like
 4 to be remembered. Thank you."
 5 (Photographs shown to the inquiry)
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper, if I may say through you, I'm
 7 very glad that Elaine's family changed their minds and
 8 did prepare this pen portrait. The pictures do tell
 9 a great deal of the sort of person Elaine McIver was and
 10 for me her personality did come through, so thank you.

11 MR COOPER: Thank you, sir.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Greaney.
 13 MR GREANEY: Sir, that concludes the hearing for today.
 14 We will resume tomorrow morning at 9.30.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.

16 (1.10 pm)
 17 (The inquiry adjourned until 9.30 am on
 18 Tuesday, 22 September 2020)
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I N D E X

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