

Spring's here and so is this latest issue of our Bulletin. We begin with the biggest news of the past months. Adoption Apologies.



**Adults Affected  
by Adoption**

### 'Forced Adoption Statement

Birthlink wishes to document the following statement in respect of the forced adoption practices that were in place in Scotland around the 1930s to the 1980s. During this period babies were cruelly and unnecessarily removed from their mothers and placed with adoptive parents. This practice did not have any regard for the mother or child's wishes or needs but was because these mothers were judged unfit due to their circumstances at the time of the birth, including not being married or being deemed to be in poverty.

During this time Birthlink operated, firstly as the "Guild of Service", followed by "Family Care". An adoption placement service was provided in the agency at a time, when both culturally and in legislation, children were adopted to meet the preferences of adults rather than to fulfil the child's welfare and development needs. Therefore, Birthlink acknowledge that the societal views would have had an influence on practice, even if this may not have been documented. We hear the voices of those affected by forced adoption and we are truly sorry for any part we may have played in this unjustified and discriminatory practice.

Birthlink also acknowledges and respects every individual's experience with regards to Scottish forced adoption practice, and the impact of loss, grief, and trauma, both at the time and thereafter. The impact on fathers, wider families and communities is also recognised.

Birthlink established the Adoption Contact Register for Scotland in 1984. This enables birth parents, adopted people and their relatives to place their names on the register with the potential of finding a match with an adopted person or family member who is also seeking to be reunited. We offer a free professional mediation service to families who wish to reconnect. We operate an After Adoption Information Line which is open to professionals and the public for advice and support relating to any matter relating to adoption.

Birthlink is committed to listening, hearing, and supporting all those affected by forced adoption.' <https://birthlink.org.uk/about-us/#>

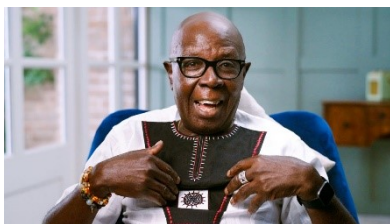
This statement of ours followed that of the then First Minister on 22 March when she made an apology on behalf of the Scottish Government. The First Minister issued a "sincere, heartfelt and unreserved" apology to people affected by the practice of forced adoption. The First Minister told Holyrood it was time to "acknowledge the terrible wrongs that have been done". She said: "What happened to these women is almost impossible to comprehend." The full statement can be read here:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/apology-historical-adoption-practices-first-ministers-speech-22-march-2023/>

## Adoption on the Telly

**Two adoption-related 'shows' in the one evening: 20 April!**

### Reunion Hotel (BBC2) Episode 3

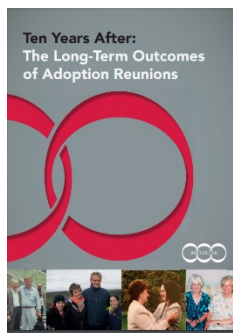


Ex-social worker, Kwesi, 70, checks in to the hotel in north Wales in the hope of meeting his

daughter Ruth, who was adopted at birth. The problem with this episode is that this viewer had to sit through two other non-adoption-related reunions.

### Long Lost Family: What Happened Next? (ITV) Episode 3

In what I'm sure is an idea pinched from us (See our publication of research into what happened next after reunion – *10 Years After: The Long-Term Outcomes of Adoption Reunions*, 2018) we caught up with three more participants from previous episodes of this perennially poignant series.



*Davina McCall co-presenter with Nicky Campbell*

When Murray was reunited with his older brother Ricky, who looked out for him during their early years in care, neither could've

predicted that someone who played a big part in their young lives was watching the show on the other side of the world (Their foster mother who is subsequently reunited with both Ricky and Murray). We also found out what happened to Ann, who discovered that her long-lost birth father lived just 12 miles away, and Jean, whose search revealed that she had six siblings. One of them, Sandra, was only able to speak to Jean online due to Covid. This episode had them meet in person for the first time.

## Our Promotional Video

'Maybe He?' features Eileen McCallum most recently known for her part as Liz Hamilton in



River City in one of three scenarios featuring our work.

The video comes in at under one and half minutes and already has had hundreds of viewers and hopefully a similar amount of interest in what we do. Watch the video at: <https://birthlink.org.uk/about-us/>



## 'Historic Adoptions': Along the Right Lines?

In the last Bulletin we expressed a hope that the commitment to redress the harms caused by what is known as 'Historic Adoptions'\* would materialise into something concrete, for example dedicated support. A piece of research commissioned by the Scottish Government seems to indicate moves in the right direction. 'The Lines Between' are an



Edinburgh-based research agency and they have launched what they have termed a 'Scoping study'.

The study aims to establish the nature and extent of existing support services:

'The study's aim is to understand what support services are currently available to, and needed by, those who affected by historical adoption in Scotland'... 'and is intended to provide the Scottish Government with information about the services currently available for post adoption support in Scotland, which will also include

identification and review of service, guidelines and training materials for GPs and mental health professionals’.

As indicated in a recent piece in *The Scotsman* written by our consultant Dr. Gary Clapton, there is a dearth of organisational support out there, both council-wise and in third sector, with ourselves head and shoulders out there as a dedicated support agency for adults affected by Scottish adoptions. Let’s hope that the research produces results.

Time is getting on for the mothers, and the fathers whose babies were given up in the ‘historic adoptions’ process. The ‘Between The Lines’ researcher can be reached at: [ian@thelinesbetween.co.uk](mailto:ian@thelinesbetween.co.uk). And you can read more about the research at: <https://birthlink.org.uk/forced-adoption-study/>

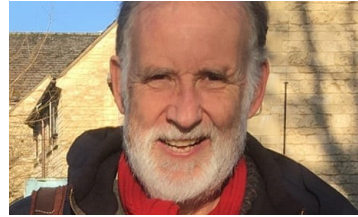
\* A definition of ‘Historic Adoptions’ has emerged that considers these to have taken place between the 1950s and 1970s, see for example the Scottish Government’s website: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/historic-al-adoption/>.

It is undoubtedly the case that during the period between the 1950s and 1970s the number of out-of-home adoptions of babies rose to a peak and that many of these would not have happened but for official and societal pressures on young women. But it is also the case that the adoptions in a previous peak in adoptions just after World War II might not have taken place if the right supports had been in place and society had been less disapproving. Furthermore, pressures to have a child adopted, perhaps less from societal disapproval and more from lacking in material supports, continue to this day.

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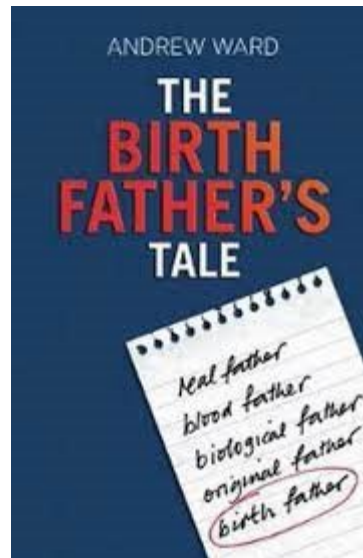
### Andy Ward 1950-2022

Bulletin readers may not have heard of Andy Ward (writes Gary Clapton) but he played an important part in putting birth fathers on the map.



Andrew Ward was the author or co-author of almost 30 sports books, including *Football Nation* (with John Williams, 2009), *Kicking and Screaming* (with Rogan Taylor, 1995) and *Armed with a Football* (1994). He co-edited *The Day of the Hillsborough Disaster* (1995). His work in higher education included *What Use is a Degree?* (with Alan Jenkins and Lynn Jones, 2002) and ‘The Writing Process’ in *Doing Academic Research* (Open University, 1998).

However it was his plans for what eventually became *The Birth Father’s Tale* (British Association for Adoption and Fostering, 2012) that brought us together.



*The Birth Fathers Tale* was the first well-researched autobiographical account of becoming and being a birth father. In it Andrew told how losing a child to the adoption process impacted upon his career choices, relationships and attitudes.

It explained why he became a specialist in follow-up studies, life-stories and narrative, working for a time as a university careers counsellor.

In 2013, we collaborated on a joint article for *Therapy Today* (‘Adoption and Birth Fathers’). In it Andy writes eloquently about the birth father experience:

‘Eighteen years after the adoption. I became a university careers counsellor. I was subconsciously searching for my lost son. Was he the student who’d carried a sandwich-board down Oxford Street during his summer holidays? Or was he the one asking about the course I’d done as a young man?’

During my adult life I have become increasingly aware of how the adoption has affected my careers choices, my relationships with women and so many of my attitudes. So much can be explained by that one incident – from my coping mechanisms at Christmas to the way that some of my relationships have replicated the adoption scenario. It wasn't until I was 47 that I decided to search actively and constructively for my son...'

(the rest of Andy's account is contained in the article we wrote together and this is available on request).

The last time I heard from Andy was an email in 2019 in which he said that 'the work we did together in 2013 was very helpful to me and it took away a lot of the angst. In a strange way it freed me up to do other books, such as *No Milk Today* (The Vanishing World of the Milkman).

Maybe I need to get serious again!

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### Relatives' Access to Adoption Records of Deceased Adopted Person

We've covered this before but a recent judgement by a Sheriff in Glasgow might just provide the tipping point. If, for example, your father or mother was adopted but have died without accessing these, currently you do not have access to their Court Process papers that would provide information relating to birth family of origin. Importantly, there is no way of then finding out what health difficulties may run in your birth family. A ruling last year had this to say about the issue:

'I consider that the court has a wider discretion whether to disclose information contained in the process to an applicant, freed from the constraints of the requirement for confidentiality. The court has to have regard to all the circumstances of the case and has to exercise its discretion fairly; the public policy of maintaining public confidence in the confidentiality of adoption files has to be considered and respected. In exercising its discretion, important considerations are the duration of time that had elapsed since the order was made, the question of whether any or all of the affected parties are deceased, the potential impact of disclosure on any relevant third parties, and any safeguards that could be put in place to mitigate that, and the nature of the connection between the applicant and the information sought is relevant.

The applicant is the child of the adopted person; the adopted person and his wife, the applicant's mother are both deceased. The applicant has no siblings. It is highly likely that the birth mother is deceased. Any upset which might be caused to any surviving relatives of the adopted child's birth mother is speculative. The adoption was over 88 years ago. The applicant's reasons for wanting the information are both intelligible and genuine. I am accordingly satisfied that the application can be granted and that the applicant can see the adoption process relating to the applicant's birth father'

Read the full judgement here: [2022scglw3.pdf](https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/2022scglw3.pdf) ([scotcourts.gov.uk](https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk))

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