

Family's long wait for inquest into hospital death is nearly over

Coroner will look into how pensioner died at Gosport War Memorial Hospital

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AN INQUEST into the death of a patient who died at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital is to finally take place after 13 years.

Gladys Richards died at the Bury Road hospital in August 1998, under the care of Dr Jane Barton.

Her daughter Gillian Mackenzie approached police with concerns over her mother's care – it was this case that initiated the original investigation by Hampshire Constabulary into deaths at the hospital.

Inquests into the deaths of five other patients at the hospital took place in 2009 when a jury ruled drugs prescribed by Dr Barton contributed to the deaths. But Mrs Richards was not included.

However, Portsmouth and South East Hampshire coroner, David Horsley has now agreed to carry out an inquest this autumn.

It follows a pre-inquest meeting between Mr Horsley, Mrs Mackenzie and her legal team.

Representing Mrs MacKenzie at the hearing was her solicitor John White from Blake Laphorn, and her barrister James Mehigan, of Took's chambers.

Mr White, who said he does not know why the inquest has taken so long to come to court, said: 'I am delighted the coroner is pursuing this inquest into circumstances of the late Mrs Richards' death.'

'She had suffered from a fall at the nursing home, Glen Heathers, where she was staying and as a result sustained a fracture of her right hip. This led to an operation at the Royal Hospital Haslar to fix the hip and Mrs Richards was then transferred to Gosport War Memorial Hospital for rehabilitation.'



INQUEST Gladys Richards died while at Gosport War Memorial Hospital

'Whilst the coroner, Mr Horsley, is going to look into the occurrence of the original fall it is, of course, apparent to him that one of the consequences of that fall and the fracture was the need for Mrs Richards to receive some pain relief.'

'It is the circumstances of the administration of that pain relief that he will also be considering and therefore the details of the care that was provided by Dr Barton and the ward staff. The coroner will consider whether the use of morphine and sedatives and tranquillizers in Mrs Richards' case contributed towards her death.'

Mrs Mackenzie did not want to comment. She and her sister Leslie O'Brien will give evidence at the inquest later this year. Dr Barton and nursing staff will also give evidence during the hearing which is expected to take a fortnight.

Mr White said: 'The coroner has allowed two weeks for the hearing, which I believe is a very positive step because this will allow the issues in the case to be thoroughly aired and the clinical staff to be held to account for their actions.'

Mr Horsley declined to explain the delay in Mrs Richards' case coming to court.



FIGHT Gillian MacKenzie

Junior school out of worst Ofsted category

NORTHERN Parade Juniors is back on track and improving, according to an Ofsted inspection that has lifted it out of the lowest category.

The North End school, which was slapped with a notice to improve last February, has now been awarded a satisfactory Ofsted with a 'good' capacity to improve.

Inspectors praised the rapid academic improvements that recorded Sats results last year in line with national average results for the first time in several years.

The report also praised improved teaching standards, more rigorous monitoring of individual pupils and a high quality of care and guidance.

Northern Parade's federation with the infant school and the new leadership team were also credited for increasing the capacity for sustained improvement.

Sue Wilson, executive head of the federation who was commended for her 'tenacious' efforts to improve the school, said: 'This is really good news for the school. It shows that all the hard work of the staff, pupils, governors and parents in the last year has been effective.'

'We're going to maintain this momentum and look forward to further improvements in the future.'

Music by the sea

THE bandstand in Southsea is the place to be this summer on a Sunday afternoon.

A musical line-up of funk, soul and folk will take centre stage every Sunday from May 29 until August 28 from 1pm to 4pm.

Go to visitportsmouth.co.uk for a full programme. Gigs are subject to change at last minute, so call (023) 9282 6722 by 11am on the day to confirm.

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PLEASED Di Lloyd

Major investment in St Vincent College

THE principal of St Vincent College in Gosport is celebrating a £1.2m grant to spruce up her site.

Di Lloyd won the maximum possible amount from the government's £57m Building Condition Improvement Fund which will be spent on general maintenance as well as colourful cladding for the main 1960s block.

Ms Lloyd, who is nearing her 23rd year at the college, said: 'This site

hasn't had investment on this scale in all the time I've been here.'

'In particular I'm looking forward to cladding our tired-looking 1960s block to bring it into the 21st century.'

'We haven't chosen a design yet but our curriculum manager for visual arts is keen to be involved.'

Ms Lloyd has her work cut out for her, as the money has to be spent by March next year. She said: 'It's

going to be busy but we're thrilled. Gosport deserves this investment.'

The funding comes as a piece of good news after colleges across the nation have been hit with severe funding cuts.

Ms Lloyd's budget has been cut by about one per cent per student, which she says the college has managed by adjusting staff hours and courses to meet the demands of students.