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*The News*  
**COMMENT**

## Time to end the doubt over deaths

**I**magine you're one of those relatives who have complained long and loud about how elderly patients have been treated at Gosport's War Memorial Hospital.

You've already suffered the grief of losing a loved one and believe there are disturbing questions surrounding the nature of their death.

Angry and upset, you make a complaint and expect some answers.

But time moves on and two inquiries both prove inconclusive.

A police report can't establish whether any crimes have been committed. One by independent watchdog the Commission for Health Improvement criticises over-use of potentially lethal drugs.

But still there is nothing to link procedural problems with any deaths.

All the while the allegations have dragged on - since 1998 - a cloud of uncertainty has hung over the hospital.

Families' suspicions have deepened and everybody who might use a hospital that serves 100,000 people has been left wondering what's really been going on behind its doors.

Staff insist that nothing untoward has ever happened, while relatives are adamant that is not the case. But what are people to believe?

Such an atmosphere couldn't continue. So we are pleased that the government's Chief Medical Officer has now announced a new and thorough investigation.

We aren't saying that the first two inquiries were not conducted properly. But this time there have to be definite conclusions.

If there has been no wrongdoing, then the professor conducting the investigation must say so and allow confidence in the hospital to return.

If there is evidence of staff being in any way responsible for elderly patients' deaths, then that too must be made public and acted upon.

After so long waiting and wondering, only definitive answers will do.



# FAREHAM & GOSPORT The News



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**PAGE 57**

## My son's life in the spotlight

In today's 16-page Weekend section: Tragic TV star Michael Elphick by the woman who knew him best  
**PLUS:** Ron Brown remembers **tasty treats**, Mike Gilson re-lives a moment of **motorway horror**, Colin McNeill explores Amsterdam and Barry Rutter judges the week's TV

Inside: Complete guide to the best TV viewing for Saturday and Sunday

### Weekend

The bright spark who became a star

Michael Elphick - from electrician to EastEnder

Barry Rutter gets all steamed up over Nigella

Brian Kidd shows you how to get a lawn like carpet

Chief Medical Officer orders major inquiry into patient deaths at Gosport hospital to finally answer the question:

# WHY DID THEY DIE?

A NEW probe has been ordered into the deaths of elderly hospital patients.

In a rare move, the country's top health boss has stepped in to order a third inquiry into deaths at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

It will be carried out by the same expert who said Manchester GP Harold Shipman may have killed more than 230 of his patients.

The new study will look at any patterns in the deaths and health chiefs stress Professor Richard Baker was only called in because he is the UK's leading expert in this type of analysis.

**COMMENT** ● Page 4  
**FULL STORY** ● Page 8 & 9



Gladys Richards



Alice Wilkie



Elsie Devine



Edna Purnell



Stanley Carby



Marjorie Bulbecks

### The News TODAY

#### Robbery trio hunted

POLICE have issued CCTV images of three men they are hunting in connection with an assault and robbery in Fareham, when a man was befriended then brutally attacked in the street.

**FULL STORY** ● Page 7

#### Baronet's big sell-off

A BARONET and his lady wife from Titchfield have decided to sell off all their possessions and start a new life in a log cabin on a farm.

**FULL STORY** ● Page 14

### Blues at the Fort

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## Villagers have chance to decide their future

**QUESTIONNAIRE:** A team of volunteers is aiming at an ambitious 70 per cent response rate for a questionnaire that could decide a village's future.

Bishop's Waltham has raised £20,000 to carry out a village appraisal of the needs and hopes of its inhabitants. It will then be used by planning bodies such as Hampshire county Council and Winchester City Council when deciding on priorities for the village.

Organisers want as many people as possible to have their say so the consultation can accurately reflect people's wishes.

And they are aiming for the 70 per cent return rate their predecessors

achieved for the last appraisal in 1982.

Bishop's Waltham parish councillor Brian Sharp said: 'We want at least a 50 per cent response so that the appraisal is truly representative.'

To hit such a high return rate, the committee of residents and councillors putting together the questionnaire plan to split Bishop's Waltham into small areas, then find volunteers to organise delivery and collection within their neighbourhood.

The questionnaire will cost around £20,000 to complete and will ask the population what they want for their village.

Questionnaires should hit doormats this autumn.



Ben Ainslie

## Sailing stars gather at club

A SAILING club is hosting the best sailors in the country for a national dinghy competition.

Olympic gold medallist Ben Ainsley will be one of the competitors at Warsash Sailing Club this weekend for the Finn National Championships.

More than 50 sailors are expected to battle it out on Solent race courses.

This is the first time the Warsash club has hosted the Finn nationals competition, named after a class of dinghy.

Sailing secretary David Wightman said: 'This is a very prestigious competition and we're honoured to have them here.'

## Heathland project gets boost

**FUNDING:** Endangered heathland is to be protected with a £750,000 project to brighten up the countryside.

More than 80 per cent of the heathland in West Sussex has been lost in the last 200 years.

Now council chiefs have secured lottery funding to restore lost heathlands to their former glory and nurture the remaining hillsides.

The project aims to reintroduce sections of heathland across the

north of county around villages including Petersfield, Midhurst and Petworth.

A special walking route called the Serpent Trail will be created by the work and will snake its way through 40 miles of the protected countryside.

Paul Bruce, manager of the heathland project, said: 'Heathland is an internationally important habitat as it supports rare wildlife such as nightjars and Dartford warblers.'

**HEALTH:** Inquiry looks into the deaths of patients whose relatives fear that their

# Third inquiry

**REBECCA ELLINOR** reports on a further probe into the deaths of elderly patients at a Gosport hospital



**THE government's chief medical officer has ordered a third probe into the deaths of elderly patients at a Gosport hospital.**

It is only the second time Sir Liam Donaldson has demanded an expert investigation of this kind – the first was in the case of Dr Harold Shipman.

The same expert who scrutinised the circumstantial evidence surrounding the deaths of patients of the Greater Manchester GP will come to Gosport to quiz staff and examine medical records.

However, the Department of Health stresses that while the ordering of an inquiry of this kind is extremely rare, and while the same man – Professor Richard Baker – will conduct it, connections between the two cases ends there.

Health officials say Professor Baker has been called in as he is regarded as the UK's leading expert in this type of inquiry.

It follows continuing concerns over the deaths of elderly patients at Gosport War Memorial Hospital which have already been the subject of investigations by the police and the health watchdog the Commission for Health Improvement.

Following the publishing of the CHI report in July this year, no formal plans were made by local health chiefs to investigate the deaths again.

But the Department of Health has now stepped in to make sure no stone is left unturned.

Sir Liam said: 'Even though both previous investigations found no grounds for serious concern, neither was in a position to establish whether trends and patterns of deaths were out of line with what would be expected.'

A department spokeswoman added: 'We're aware of local concerns and those from family members of people who died at that hospital, of course we are.'

'We are having this further investigation to make sure everything is done to satisfy not just ourselves but also people in the Gosport area.'

Professor Baker will draw on medical records, staff rotas, times of death, the amount of drugs given and the condition of each patient who died.

The relatives of patients who died following treatment at Gosport's War

## THE OFFICIAL COMPLAINTS



A POLICE inquiry was triggered by a complaint from Gillian Mackenzie, whose 91-year-old mother Gladys Richards died at the hospital in August 1998.

She died at Gosport War Memorial Hospital after being transferred from the Royal Hospital Haslar for rehabilitation following a hip operation.

When *The News* revealed the complaint 17 months ago the police had sent evidence from their investigation to crown prosecutors.

The Crown Prosecution Service scrutinised the police file but decided that there were no grounds for a prosecution.

In the meantime more relatives came forward to complain about the treatment of family members who died at the hospital.

One family asked for an independent review, which was carried out by medical staff from

another organisation on the south coast, others involved the ombudsman – the official NHS watchdog – but nothing substantial came from those.

This caused relatives to lodge official complaints against the police about the way they handled the investigation.

When the complaints were lodged, police held an internal inquiry into how officers had handled the case. A report was compiled by Chief Superintendent Dan Clacher.

Now his report, the report compiled by the Commission for Health Improvement plus reports into four other deaths at the hospital are to be sent to the Crown Prosecution Service.

In the meantime relatives had also complained to the General Medical Council and the Nursing and Midwifery Council about the conduct of staff.

Memorial Hospital – among them Gladys Richards, Dulcie Middleton, Edna Purnell, Alice Wilkie, Elsie Devine and Stanley Carby – greeted the decision with delight and relief.

They said they had high hopes some progress would finally be made and answers given.

Gillian Mackenzie, whose mother Mrs Richards died in 1998, said: 'I am absolutely thrilled to hear about this.'

'I hope the police and others will now take it just as seriously. It is a great step forward and I look forward to hearing what happens.'

Ian Piper, chief executive of the Fareham and Gosport Primary Care Trust, the health group that oversees the running of the War Memorial Hospital, said he also welcomed this third inquiry.

He said: 'I sympathise with the relatives; we want to do everything we can to find some answers for these

families, staff at the hospital and community in Gosport.'

Mr Piper said he wanted to reinforce the point that many changes have already been made to staff numbers and procedures at the hospital since the deaths in 1998.

Hampshire Police Deputy Chief Constable Ian Readhead said: 'We are aware of the appointment of Professor Baker. We will fully support his work in any way we can.'

'I personally met bereaved relatives for two hours on Wednesday at Fareham police station to discuss the current status of our inquiries. I have assured them that I will keep them as fully informed as I can of the progress of our work.'

Professor Baker's investigation is expected to begin within the next few weeks, once he has liaised with Hampshire police. He will submit a report of his findings to Sir Liam.

**The News**

**Baby of the Year competition**

**VOTE FOR YOUR BABY**

All photographs received will appear will appear in **The News supplement on Monday, September 23, 2002**

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Alan Milburn

## Families welcome department's statement

**FAMILIES** who have been fighting for answers about their relatives' deaths at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital welcomed the announcement by the Department of Health.

Gillian Mackenzie, whose mother Gladys Richards died in 1998, said that she hoped it would make other organisations take notice.

She said: 'I am absolutely thrilled to hear

about this. It means the department of health is taking these cases seriously.'

'It is a great step forward and I look forward to hearing what happens.'

Emily Yeats, whose grandmother Alice Wilkie died at the hospital, was also pleased.

She said: 'If this is the case then it is very welcome. I hope that the

police will also look at any report. I also hope that it will make other people as high up as Alan Milburn, the Secretary of State for Health, take notice.'

Marjorie Bulbeck, whose mother Dulcie Middleton died, said: 'We have all written to the General Medical Council and we have all written to ministers and at last something seems to be being done.'



treatment at Gosport War Memorial Hospital, was not all it should have been

# into OAPs' deaths



Gosport War Memorial hospital, where the deaths of some elderly patients are to be investigated again

## THE EXPERT

**PROFESSOR Richard Baker** is a member of the Clinical Governance and Research Development Unit based at the University of Leicester. He has been called in to carry out a clinical audit which will look at any trends and patterns in the deaths of former Gosport War Memorial Hospital patients. He has only been called upon by the government's health department once before; in the case of Dr Harold Shipman, following his conviction. Professor Baker was called in because he is the country's leading authority



**Professor Richard Baker** on this type of audit which will include an examination of issues including medical records, staff rotas, times of death and drugs doses. A spokeswoman for the

Department of Health said: 'We've chosen Professor Baker to carry out this audit because he is the premier national expert. 'We are aware his involvement will raise queries but it was important we had the best. 'It's important to keep an open mind about the outcome of this investigation,' she added. While Professor Baker has no formal powers, the health spokeswoman said it would be 'unthinkable' for anyone to refuse to help him with his investigation. The health spokeswoman added: 'It's a priority that

we ensure a thorough and rigorous methodology is used for this sort of thing. Every single aspect of the deaths will be explored.' In the case of Shipman, who was convicted of the murder of 15 patients, Professor Baker discovered the GP had probably killed 236 of his patients and may have killed more than 300. Raw statistics suggested that at the extreme there were 345 extra deaths when Shipman's records were compared with normal practice at similar surgeries. However, a more detailed analysis of the circumstances surrounding

each death showed a probable figure to be 236, because these were patients who died at home. Factors such as the time of death and whether relatives of Shipman himself were present were taken into account. Many of Shipman's patients also appeared to have died in the afternoon, which is considered unusual. Professor Baker presented the government's chief medical officer with the circumstantial evidence he found and highlighted any cases where he thought there was reason for concern.

## Watchdog was asked to see how elderly patients were treated

HEALTH watchdog the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) was called in last year to scrutinise the way elderly people were treated at Gosport's War Memorial Hospital. It was particularly asked to look at arrangements for the administering of drugs, responsibility of patient care and the transfer of patients between the War Memorial and

other hospitals. The inquiry at the Gosport community hospital was only the seventh special investigation CHI had been involved with. The CHI found: ■ Serious concerns regarding prescribing of medicines to older people. ■ Not possible to say whether high dosages of drugs led to any deaths.

- Welcomed introduction of new policies governing drugs.
  - No significant concerns about the standard of nursing care now.
  - Health bosses should have responded quicker to concerns over sedation levels.
  - Complaints led to changes like improved levels of staffing and better communication with relatives.
- Main conclusions of the CHI

study were that there were: ■ Insufficient guidelines on the prescribing of powerful drugs. ■ A lack of checking of data led to high-dosage prescribing going unchallenged. ■ Poor prescribing practice not noticed. ■ A lack of thorough assessments of patients' needs on admission. Many changes have been

made to procedures at the hospital since the time of the deaths in 1998. The CHI praised the changes but asked the hospital to make further improvements reviewing its guidelines on drug prescribing, how it handles complaints, staff training and leadership. A draft action plan was sent to the CHI by Gosport health bosses this week.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Games boss died from wasp sting

**VENTNOR:** The former boss of console games giant Sega has died at his home on the Isle of Wight after being stung by a wasp. Victor Leslie, European head of the Japanese company, died at a family barbecue last weekend. An inquest heard Mr Leslie was stung on the tongue by the wasp. He died from asphyxia. The inquest was adjourned.

### Chance to object

**WALTHAM CHASE:** The public has the chance to protest over plans to build two new houses on a plot in Winchester Road. Winchester City Council turned down an outline application to build the homes behind the existing building at Red Roof. Now an appeal has been lodged. Comments to the Planning Inspectorate, Room 3/08B, Kite Wing, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6PN.

### Day at the park

**HAVANT:** A horticultural day is to take place at Staunton Country Park. The event will provide an unique insight into restoration work at the park and will include a gardener's question time with Brian Kidd. It takes place from 11am on September 25. Admission costs £6.50 and must be booked in advance. Details on (023) 9245 3405.

### Photo exhibition

**HAYLING ISLAND:** An exhibition of local photography has been arranged by the Island's Camera Club. The photos to be on display have been selected by club members through open competition. They will be on display at Havant Museum, in East Street, between September 14 and October 21.

### Victorian medicine

**PORTSMOUTH:** Medicine in Victorian times will be the subject of a talk next month. The Portsmouth branch of the Dickens Fellowship hosts the talk at Norrish Centre Library in Guildhall Square from 2.30pm on October 8.

### WHAT THEY SAID



'The pupils have taken strength from each other and have been able to talk about Dame Judith with the staff' - **Bev Scammel**, City of Portsmouth Girls' School head, on pupils' reactions to the death of head Dame Judith Kilpatrick.