

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

Weekend

Saturday, September 21, 2002



Why did my mother die?

The OAP who won't stop fighting until she's found the truth



Mike Gilson on the trouble with term-time

PLUS



Ron Brown on the old time bakery round

The News

COVER STORY

'I didn't go to the police because my mother had died. I went because I thought the law had been broken'

THE STORY SO FAR

GILLIAN Mackenzie complained to police after her mother, Gladys Richards, died at Gosport War Memorial Hospital in August 1998. She had been admitted for rehabilitation after a hip operation at the Royal Hospital Haslar and doctors put her on a mixture of powerful drugs including heroin-based diamorphine.

Mrs Mackenzie believes they crossed the line between treating a patient for pain and contributing to her death. Her official complaint sparked a police inquiry, but the Crown Prosecution Service examined the file and said there was not enough evidence to secure any convictions.

When she protested to the Police Complaints Authority about the way she was dealt with, it upheld her complaint and disciplinary action was taken against two officers.

An internal hospital inquiry was also carried out, but no staff were disciplined as a result.

Another inquiry was conducted by the Commission for Health Improvement, an independent watchdog set up by the Department of Health.

The CHI found there was systematic failure to provide good care, including insufficient guidelines on prescribing painkillers and sedatives, inadequate review of prescribing for older people and lack of supervision.

A draft action plan was sent to the CHI by Gosport health bosses earlier this month.

The government's chief medical officer, Sir Liam Donaldson, has now launched a further inquiry.

Hampshire police has also said it is to resubmit its file on Gosport War Memorial Hospital, complete with the CHI findings, to the CPS.

Mrs Mackenzie and relatives of about a dozen other patients who died at the hospital hope it will convince the CPS that their cases should be investigated further.

This week *The News* revealed that Dr Jane Barton, who was in day-to-day charge of medical care at the hospital until July 2000, is facing a charge of serious professional misconduct by the General Medical Council.



Above: Gillian Mackenzie with her mother Gladys Richards
Below: Mrs Mackenzie asking some tough questions to members of the hospital board during a meeting at Fareham Civic Offices



member of the University of the Third Age, getting involved in current affairs and music groups. Her interests include psychology and philosophy and she says she never stops learning.

'I find relaxation in the reference library. I'm always discovering something new.'

She has 'a hell of a lot' of paperwork, neatly kept in files in a spare bedroom. She also has her own mini legal library, complete with police training manuals that she has scrutinised to pursue her claims that officers did not properly investigate her initial complaint.

She says of the police and the medical authorities: 'I would have thought they'd realised by now that I'm not going to go away. This is going to take me years, but that doesn't worry me in the slightest.'

'I'm still facing a lot of obstacles. I know it's far from over. But nothing deters me because I believe I'm right.'

Officialdom and battling against authority doesn't worry her. Last month she wrote to the Attorney-General setting out her views on how her case had been handled by the police and had previously fired off a missive to the Director of Public Prosecutions and several to the Chief Constable of Hampshire. Copies have gone to Tony Blair.

She says: 'I am not in awe of anybody. I have always been a great admirer of Rumpole of the Bailey (a barrister created by John Mortimer and played by Leo McKern), but I always say I take after his wife, who he called "she who must be obeyed".'

She believes more people should complain if they're not happy with how they've been treated.

'I think we have the NHS we deserve because we treat doctors as Gods. They are normal human beings who don't know it all.'

Mrs Mackenzie is an active