

the truth

Mike Gilson on the trouble with term-time

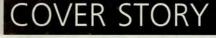
Ron Brown on the old time bakery round

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'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.

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.' 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





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

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

the Director of Public

previously fired off a missive to

Prosecutions and several to the

Leo McKern), but I always 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

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.' medical officer, Sir Liam Donaldson, has now launched a further inquiry.

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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.