

The News



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Tuesday, July 13, 2004

34p

Win a weekend break and see Dianne Warwick in concert

LifeStyle

Our true-blue wedding

A makeover well worth waiting for

The ferry captain who's making waves

My magical makeover

■ Mum Melanie's new look ■ Win a luxury break ■ See LifeStyle, inside



153

nurses quizzed by police

69

months of investigation

90

deaths now in case file
...and still grim inquiry goes on at hospital

FULL STORY ■ PAGE 3

NEWS

Parents' anguish at drink tragedy

THE parents of a man found dead on Southsea Common say they wish he had been kept in prison for longer so that he could overcome his drink problem.



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Fake receipts of shop con woman

A WOMAN conned shops around Chichester using fake receipts, but said she did not realise how criminal her actions were.

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TRUE LIFE



Rachel Dunn is not your average sea captain - and she's used to all the jokes about reverse parking...

LIFESTYLE ■ PAGE 22

SPORT

Fulham £3m bid doubt over Andy

ANDY Faye's future with Pompey was thrown into doubt today after Fulham made a £3m bid for the midfielder.



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INQUIRY: Detectives probing deaths of more than 90 patients will now question doctors

Police quiz 153 nurses in hospital deaths case

by **Nicholas Brooks**
Health reporter

MORE than 150 nurses have been interviewed in a huge police probe into deaths at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

Officers are investigating the deaths of more than 90 people between 1996 and 1999 after relatives raised the alarm about treatment at the hospital.

So far detectives from Operation Rochester have spoken to 153 nurses who might have been witnesses to events at the hospital during that time.

Police, who say the operation has become 'proactive', have now moved on to question doctors and consultants.

Officers say the mammoth task of interviewing staff will take at least until October - meaning more waiting for anxious families who have already seen the cases drag on for six years.

Around a dozen police officers are working on the operation, including three PCs and a sergeant added over the past few months.

As well as the massive round of interviews, the medical notes of the cases causing officers most alarm have been sent to a second panel of experts.

Leading authorities in geriatric and palliative care, toxicology, nursing and general practice will judge whether they think the elderly patients were cared for properly.

Detective Chief Inspector Dave Williams, in charge of the day-to-day running of Operation Rochester, said most of the 90 deaths were not being viewed as possible criminal cases.

But he added that the police probe was 'particularly proactive', at the moment.

'A small percentage of those cases are to be subject to closer investigation to establish whether or not any criminal offences have been committed,' he said.

'So far 153 nurses have



Dulcie Middleton



Alice Wilkie



Elsie Devine



Gladys Richards



Stanley Carby



Edna Purnell

Families believe morphine was given when not necessary

THE police probes centre on morphine - the strong painkilling drug often given to terminally-ill patients in their final days. The families believe that their relatives were given the drug when it

was not needed, or were given high doses.

Hospital chiefs stress that procedures have now changed, and that Gosport War Memorial Hospital today is safe.

Drugs such as morphine can now only be given under supervision, there are tighter rules on documenting which drugs have been given out, and more training programmes are provided.

been interviewed, that process is ongoing, and we are currently interviewing as witnesses doctors and consultants as well as nursing staff.'

Concerns about the hospital were first raised in 1998 when Gillian MacKenzie complained about the treatment

of her mother Gladys Richards, who died in October of that year.

By the beginning of this year there were concerns raised about 62 deaths - and that number has risen to 90 as more families, solicitors and professional health care organisations came forward.

The deaths of Elsie Devine, Dulcie Middleton, Edna Purnell, Alice Wilkie and Stanley Carby are among those being investigated.

Mrs MacKenzie said she was pleased that officers appeared to be stepping up their inquiries.

But she feared deaths

might be written off by the police without them seeing all the evidence.

'The police have told us that things are being speeded up at the moment,' she said.

'But there are still witnesses who haven't been spoken to, after all this time.'

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Fourth investigation is expected to take rest of the year

SINCE the first concerns were raised in October 1998, there have been several long-running inquiries into Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

By late 2001 there were 10 families involved in the inquiry, eventually growing to 62, and now rising to 90.

The current police probe is the fourth, after a previous three were all dropped.

The first investigation was slammed as inadequate by the Police Complaints Authority, and another is also being looked at to see whether officers fully investigated

the cases. The pressure on officers to crank up their efforts grew in 2002 when the health watchdog the Commission for Health Improvement published a damning report into drug prescribing at the hospital.

The authors concluded that although they could not definitely say patients died because of the drug regime at Gosport, they were 'regularly put at risk'.

Following that an audit of death rates at the hospital was undertaken. The report is now complete, but is unlikely to be pub-

lished while inquiries go on.

As part of the current probe, begun in October 2003, national expert Robert Forrest was called in to lead a team of experts.

As a result of his findings the families were split into three categories - deaths by 'natural causes', those 'needing more investigation', and those 'causing serious concern'. Police have refused to say how many deaths fall into each category.

Police sources believe that the inquiry will continue until at least the end of the year.



Gosport War Memorial Hospital

NEWS IN BRIEF

Nursery opens for NHS parents

CHICHESTER: A new 66-place nursery for NHS workers at St Richard's Hospital opened today.

The Little Richard's nursery already has half of the subsidised spaces taken up, with another 12 unborn babies on the waiting list.

The nursery, looking after children from 12 weeks to five years old, cost £750,000 - £450,000 from the hospital trust itself, and the rest from the Surrey and Sussex Strategic Health Authority.

Bridge lights fail

PORTSMOUTH: The one-way Copnor Bridge became two-way yesterday when the lights controlling the traffic flow in each direction failed.

Cones were placed in the road to separate traffic as engineers worked to solve the problem, said to be caused by a computer glitch.

Party at palace

PORTSMOUTH: The new Lord Mayor of Portsmouth was today due to meet the Queen.

Labour city councillor for the Nelson ward Jason Fazackarley is to attend a royal garden party at Buckingham Palace.

USEFUL NUMBERS

Police
Hampshire Constabulary 0845 045 4545; Sussex Police 0845 607 0999

Fire
Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (023) 8064 4000; West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (01243) 786211

(In emergencies, always dial 999.)

Samaritans
Portsmouth area (023) 9269 1313; Chichester area (01243) 826333

Gas
Transco emergency line 0800 111 999

Electric
Southern Electric emergency line 0845 770 8090 or 0845 744 4555

Water
Portsmouth Water (023) 9247 7999 or (023) 9249 9888; Southern Water 0845 278 0845 or leaks line 0800 820 999; South-East Water 0845 602 1724 or 0845 301 0845; Floodline 0845 988 1188

Bid to break in

GOSPORT: A would-be thief used a tool to try and force open windows to a flat.

Police say the front and rear windows of the property in Magennis Close at Rowner were targeted between July 4 and July 7.