

Families welcome fresh inquiry into deaths at hospital

Bishop appointed to lead new probe

by PRIYA MISTRY
Health reporter
priya.mistry@thenews.co.uk

A NEW investigation looking at historic death rates at Gosport War Memorial Hospital has been welcomed by relatives of those who died.

Care minister Norman Lamb has launched an independent probe into concerns raised about the care and deaths of older people at hospital from the 1980s to the early 2000s.

The move for a new inquiry has been welcomed.

The stepson of Arthur 'Brian' Cunningham, who died at the hospital in 1998, aged 79, believes that it is long overdue.

Charles Farthing, said: 'There's been a blatant cover-up from the beginning. There may have been investigations, but someone has been controlling what's coming out and what information is not.'

'This has all been dreadful and an investigation like this should have happened 10 years ago.'

'But the system has been covering things up for whatever reason, and now I hope this investigation will get to the bottom of it all.'

His stepfather had been admitted to the hospital with bed sores, but died days later.

Dr Jane Barton had prescribed powerful painkillers, despite Mr Farthing asking for them not to be given.

The inquiry has been welcomed by Gosport MP Caroline Dinenege.

She said: 'This is a very important development and is welcome.'

'This panel is entirely independent from the government and the families have had a say in who is on the panel.'

'For all those involved, from bereaved families to hospital staff, this has been a very long and difficult journey.'

'This marks the first step in finally bringing closure to this case.'

Bishop James Jones, who previously chaired an independent panel looking at the Hillsborough stadium disaster, will head the investigation.

The panel is made up of geriatric medicine specialist Dr Colin Currie, investigative journalist David Hencke and former Scotland Yard Commander Duncan Jarrett. Dr Bill Kirkup, pathology and medical records expert, will join after his work with the Morecambe Bay investigation into the deaths of 23 cockle pickers concludes.

15-YEAR FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

THE death of Gladys Richards, pictured, at Gosport War Memorial Hospital in 1998 sparked a 15-year campaign for justice.

Following her death, daughter Gillian Mackenzie approached police with concerns over her mother's care under Dr Jane Barton, who was linked to a string of other deaths at the hospital.

This prompted an investigation by Hampshire Constabulary.

In April 2009, an inquest was held in Portsmouth into the deaths of five patients cared for by Dr Barton.

A jury ruled drugs prescribed by the GP contributed to the deaths of Elsie Devine, 88, Elsie Lavender, 83, Robert Wilson, 74, Brian

Cunningham, 79, and Geoffrey Packman, 68.

Following the inquest, the General Medical Council held a hearing into Dr Barton's fitness to practise.

She was found guilty of 'multiple instances of serious professional misconduct' relating to 12 patients who died at the hospital, but was not struck off.

Dr Barton decided to retire from Forton Medical Centre in Gosport in early 2010 and a year later applied to GMC to have her name removed from the register, and can no longer practise as a GP in the UK.

An inquest last year into the death of Ms Richards recorded a narrative verdict.



INQUIRY Gosport War Memorial Hospital

Event highlights risks of travel to war-torn Syria

MORE than 100 people attended a community event held to raise awareness of the risks of travelling to war-torn Syria.

It was held at Southsea's Friendship Centre in Elm Grove.

Those attending wanted to find out how to help people in their community who may be affected by the crisis in Syria.

City resident Shefali Uddin said: 'We all need to learn how to talk about these issues especially with young people. My best friend's cousin went to Syria and was killed out there recently, his family are devastated. I feel really sad for them, especially for his parents who have lost their son.'

Steve Hawkins, from Hampshire police, said: 'Travelling to Syria is extremely dangerous. Many young people have been killed or injured. Fighters who return are likely to face prosecution under UK law.'

The event was organised by the Safer Portsmouth Partnership.

Campaigners meet

PEOPLE hoping to convince a developer to return a piece of land to the public are set to meet tomorrow.

The Anglesey Conservation Group wants to see Stokesmead in Alverstoke given back to the public.

After years of failed planning applications Abbey Homes has agreed to meet in parliament.



Bishop Jones said: 'Many families have ongoing concerns about the way their relatives were treated and how their complaints have been handled.'

'I want to help provide clarity and understanding for the families.'

'By working with them to set

and deliver the terms of reference with a panel of experts from different fields, I believe I can achieve this.'

'Independence and integrity will be the hallmarks of the panel's work.'

The panel will hear from families of those who died at the

hospital and examine documents from the time before producing a report. There is no set time for the investigation to conclude.

If any other family feels affected, then they can email enquiries@gosportpanel.independent.gov.uk

COMMENT ■ PAGE 22

ANGELA Holidays

JANUARY & FEBRUARY GETAWAYS

05 Jan: Warners Sinah Warren Self drive.....	5 day £189
05 Jan: Paignton at Leisure "Cosy Break".....	5 day £169 REDUCED PRICE
10 Jan: Austria "drinks inclusive".....	8 day £514
19 Jan: Liverpool & The Mersey.....	5 day £255
23 Jan: Angela Holidays - Re Union - Warners Bembridge Coast Hotel.....	4 days £199 (only 4 rooms left)
25 Jan: Brugge & Ghent Light Festival.....	4 day £249
26 Jan: English Lakes.....	5 day £249
01 Feb: Irish House Party.....	5 day £299
02 Feb: Angela Bowls Classic Pairs Bowling Competition Warners Lakeside - self drive.....	5 days £182
02 Feb: Bronte Country & York.....	5 day £211
02 Feb: Torquay at leisure "cosy break".....	5 day £175 REDUCED PRICE
15 Feb: Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the Mosel.....	5 day £269
15 Feb: Ludlow Winter Warmer.....	5 day £299
16 Feb: Somerset "cosy break".....	5 day £189
16 Feb: A Cornish Gem.....	5 day £285
20 Feb: Italian Riviera - Menton & Lemon festival.....	10 day £717
22 Feb: Tuscan Riviera.....	10 day £599

Contact us now for full details
Oaktree House, Lowford, Bursledon, Southampton, SO31 8ES
Tel : (023) 80408221
E-mail : bookings@angelaholidays.co.uk
Web : www.angelaholidays.co.uk

