

■ **INQUESTS:** Second day of looking at evidence on 10 deceased patients

Jurors deciding whether drugs caused deaths

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by **Chris Owen**
Chief reporter

EIGHT jurors were today spending their second day sifting through piles of evidence in an attempt to reach verdicts in an unprecedented series of inquests.

The five women and three men at Portsmouth Crown Court retired yesterday morning with an avalanche of notes and documents gleaned from four weeks of listening to the details of the deaths of 10 hospital patients.

The 10 died at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital between 1996 and 1999.

Their ages ranged from 68 to 99, and most of their relatives have fought for 10 years to have these cases aired in public.

They took up the fight because they believe their loved ones died unexpectedly after being given high doses of powerful painkillers and sedatives.



Coroner Andrew Bradley sent them out to start thinking about their verdicts at 10.10am yesterday.

As they filed from Court One in the Winston Churchill Avenue building they took with them sheaves of notes they had taken throughout the four weeks of the hearings.

As they left the room Mr Bradley said: 'I suspect they might be some time.'

CASES BEING EXAMINED

■ The hearings are looking into the deaths of 82-year-old Leslie Pittock; Elsie Lavender, 83; Helena Service, 99; Ruby Lake, 84; Arthur, known as Brian, Cunningham, 79; Robert Wilson, 74; Enid Spurgeon, 92; Geoffrey, known as Mick, Packman, 68; Elsie Devine, 88, and Sheila Gregory, 91.

But half an hour later they sent word that they wanted even more documents.

These were the patients' drug charts recorded on Dryad ward at the Bury Road hospital and copies of statements from various nurses that were read as evidence by Mr Bradley throughout the inquests.

Mr Bradley had to call them back into court to explain that they could have them but they would have to be copied. This took another hour.

The jury then retired again.

They are considering three questions on each of the 10 deaths.

The first is whether they consider the administration of any medication caused death.

If they believe the answer to that is 'yes' they then have to consider whether those drugs were given for therapeutic purposes and whether they were appropriate for the condition from which the patient was suffering.

Dr Jane Barton, the Gosport GP who was also in charge of patient care on Dryad ward and around whom all 10 cases centre, was not present in court yesterday. She had been present throughout the case

(Proceeding)
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