

# Family's long wait for inquest into hospital death is nearly over

Coroner will look into how pensioner died at Gosport War Memorial Hospital

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AN INQUEST into the death of a patient who died at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital is to finally take place after 13 years.

Gladys Richards died at the Bury Road hospital in August 1998, under the care of Dr Jane Barton.

Her daughter Gillian Mackenzie approached police with concerns over her mother's care - it was this case that initiated the original investigation by Hampshire Constabulary into deaths at the hospital.

Inquests into the deaths of five other patients at the hospital took place in 2009 when a jury ruled drugs prescribed by Dr Barton contributed to the deaths. But Mrs Richards was not included.

However, Portsmouth and South East Hampshire coroner, David Horsley has now agreed to carry out an inquest this autumn.

It follows a pre-inquest meeting between Mr Horsley, Mrs Mackenzie and her legal team.

Representing Mrs MacKenzie at the hearing was her solicitor John White from Blake Laphorn, and her barrister James Mehigan, of Took's chambers.

Mr White, who said he does not know why the inquest has taken so long to come to court, said: 'I am delighted the coroner is pursuing this inquest into circumstances of the late Mrs Richards' death.

'She had suffered from a fall at the nursing home, Glen Heathers, where she was staying and as a result sustained a fracture of her right hip. This led to an operation at the Royal Hospital Haslar to fix the hip and Mrs Richards was then transferred to Gosport War Memorial Hospital for rehabilitation.



**INQUEST** Gladys Richards died while at Gosport War Memorial Hospital

'Whilst the coroner, Mr Horsley, is going to look into the occurrence of the original fall it is, of course, apparent to him that one of the consequences of that fall and the fracture was the need for Mrs Richards to receive some pain relief.

'It is the circumstances of the administration of that pain relief that he will also be considering and therefore the details of the care that was provided by Dr Barton and the ward staff. The coroner will consider whether the use of morphine and sedatives and tranquillizers in Mrs Richards' case contributed towards her death.'

Mrs Mackenzie did not want to comment. She and her sister Leslie O'Brien will give evidence at the inquest later this year. Dr Barton and nursing staff will also give evidence during the hearing which is expected to take a fortnight.

Mr White said: 'The coroner has allowed two weeks for the hearing, which I believe is a very positive step because this will allow the issues in the case to be thoroughly aired and the clinical staff to be held to account for their actions.'

Mr Horsley declined to explain the delay in Mrs Richards' case coming to court.



**FIGHT** Gillian MacKenzie

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