

Mrs M Y Barney

Code A

7 April 2009

Dear Mrs Barney

I refer to your letter dated 31 March 2009 which I received on 3 April 2009.

Section 8 of the Coroners Act 1988 provides that

"8(1) Where a Coroner is informed that the body of a person is lying within his district and there is reasonable cause to suspect that the deceased

- a) has died a violent or an unnatural death;
- b) has died a sudden death of which the cause is unknown; or
- c) has died in prison or in such a place or in such circumstances as to require an Inquest under any other Act;

then, whether the cause of death arose within his district or not, the Coroner shall as soon as practicable hold an Inquest into the death of the deceased."

These are the only circumstances under the law in which a Coroner can hold an Inquest.

"Operation Rochester" was an investigation by Hampshire Police into 92 deaths at Gosport War Memorial Hospital during the 1990's. None of these deaths were reported at the time to the then Coroner. Doctors' death certificates were issued in respect of all of them.

Following the Police investigation, I believed that I had reasonable cause to suspect that some 10 of these deaths might be violent or unnatural in the light

of the evidence presented to me by the Police. I opened Inquests into these deaths which are the subject of the current hearings. There was one other death, not included in those 10, where the evidence suggested to me that the death might be violent or unnatural and where I will be holding an Inquest in the future. The circumstances of this death were somewhat different from the other 10 and it was a death which I consider should have been reported to the Coroner in the first place.

Having considered the evidence gathered by the Police during Operation Rochester in relation to all the other deaths that were investigated, I do not believe I have any reasonable cause to suspect that the deaths were due to anything other than natural causes. Hence, it is not my intention to hold Inquests into any of them.

Yours sincerely

David C Horsley

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cc Mr A M Bradley
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