

## Gosport War Memorial Hospital

These proceedings <sup>are</sup> ~~our~~ ten separate Inquests into people who have died at Gosport War Memorial Hospital. For the sake of ease and convenience I am running all ten of them concurrently because there is a degree of commonality about them so the proceedings will essentially comprise personal facts for each of the deceased and a certain amount of generic evidence dealing with the hospital itself, the way it was staffed and the way in which patients were cared for.

The purpose of an Inquest is to establish the identity of the deceased, the injury or disease from which he has died, the time, place and circumstances at or in which that injury is sustained and then to enter a ~~verdict~~ <sup>conclusion</sup> according to the evidence that is heard.

It is no part of an Inquest to apportion blame and the Coroners Act specifically precludes that from happening and if I find that I or the Jury are being lead in that direction I will stop the questioning. It is vital that everyone involved in this process understands that position.

~~Of~~ those who are a subject of Inquest three have been buried and the other seven were cremated. By order of the Secretary of State Inquests are to be held notwithstanding that the bodies of the seven who were cremated are no longer in existence. However the facts of the matter are felt worthy of investigation and on that basis the appropriate orders have been made and these ten Inquests are to be heard.

Gosport War Memorial Hospital is a community hospital which at the time was part of the Portsmouth Health Care (NHS) Trust until it was transferred to the Primary Care Trust under the terms of Health Service reorganisation..

The hospital operates on a day to day basis by nursing and support staff and you will hear evidence from some of those.

For the relevant period Dr Jane Barton was the GP who provided clinical cover in each of the cases with which we are dealing.

Generally the patients at Gosport were elderly and were transferred there for rehabilitation or palliative care.

You will hear evidence from family members of the ten deceased and it would be helpful for you to note the evidence as it happens because at the conclusion of the proceedings I will need you to complete an Inquisition in respect of each deceased.

Within the personal evidence to accommodate availability you will hear from nursing staff, from Dr Read and Dr Barton\* and from Professor Black and Professor Wilcock who are experts instructed to give an opinion in respect of each case as to cause of death, standard of care and general nursing and clinical care.

\* who were clinicians at the hospital

Each death now must be re-examined and at the conclusion of the evidence I will ask you to complete the Inquisition form and the only matter fixed for each deceased is the identification. As to the remainder you as a Jury will complete what you consider to be the Injury of Disease causing death, the time, place and circumstances at and in which that is sustained and you will then reach a conclusion for each deceased.

When the evidence has been concluded I will address you as to the procedure and the available verdicts open to you and the way to approach the conclusions that you reach.

As the evidence is taken you will be afforded an opportunity to ask any questions that you may have and the families of each deceased can ask any questions may be relevant and may be within the ambit of the Inquest.

Any questions at this stage?