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weekend opinions

The News COMMENT

Time to end the doubt over deaths

I imagine you're one of those relatives who have complained long and loud about how elderly patients have been treated at Gosport's War Memorial Hospital.

You've already suffered the grief of losing a loved one and believe there are disturbing questions surrounding the nature of their death.

Angry and upset, you make a complaint and expect some answers.

But time moves on and two inquiries both prove inconclusive.

A police report can't establish whether any crimes have been committed. One by independent watchdog the Commission for Health Improvement criticises over use of potentially lethal drugs.

But still there is nothing to tick procedural problems with any deaths.

All the while the allegations have dragged on - since 1998 - a cloud of uncertainty has hung over the hospital.

Families' suspicions have deepened and everybody who might use a hospital that serves 100,000 people has been left wondering what's really been going on behind its doors.

Staff insist that nothing untoward has ever happened, while relatives are adamant that is not the case. But what are people to believe?

Such an atmosphere couldn't continue. So we are pleased that the government's Chief Medical Officer has now announced a new and thorough investigation.

We aren't saying that the first two inquiries were not conducted properly. But this time there have to be definite conclusions.

If there has been no wrongdoing, then the professor conducting the investigation must say so and allow confidence in the hospital to return.

If there is evidence of staff being in any way responsible for elderly patients' deaths, then that too must be made public and acted upon.

After so long waiting and wondering, only definitive answers will do.

Our very own 'bloody tower'!

I read Mr W J Edwards's letter about the tower.

I suppose the Salamaker needs be classed as our very own Bloody Tower and I'm sure it must have been called that many times by now!

We would certainly like to see a few heads roll over the whole business.

However the song that was mentioned is about Anne Boleyn, and this is the version of the song known by me:

In the Tower of London lie we by the ghost of Anne Boleyn walks they declare Now Anne Boleyn was once King Henry's wife I have to make the axe man bob her hair

Ah, but that was long long years ago And the years is right to tell man so With her head tucked underneath her arm She walks the Bloody Tower At the midnight hour

Along the Tower's corridors She walks and walks she goes She often catches cold poor dear It's draughty when it blows And it's awfully awkward for the guard To have to blow her nose With her head tucked underneath her arm.

Eileen Richardson (Mrs)
Gibbins Road, Southsea

My recollection of the "Tower Song" is a little different from your reader D L Adkins. It goes like this:

There in the Tower of London lives we life The ghost of Anne Boleyn walks they declared Now Anne Boleyn was once King Henry's wife Until the day his henchman bobbed her head He done her wrong long years ago And now she comes each night to tell us so. With her head tucked underneath her arm she walks the bloody tower, with her head tucked underneath her arm at the midnight hour Along the draughty corridors he walks and walks she goes. She often catches colds poor thing It's cold there when it blows It must be very awkward for the guard to blow her nose. With her head tucked underneath her arm.

That is how I recall the song but I can't remember who sang it (if song is the right words. Perhaps someone knows.

M J Chapman
Manchester Road, Southsea

In response to the somewhat cynical comments about the name of the Tower (which I and many others are in favour of) may I make a serious one?

Millennium is near, clearly a nonsense, but with the 900th anniversary approaching, its still shape and location, what about "Tradalgar Tower"?

G Griffiths
Oyster Mews, Old Portsmouth

Which millennium is this Salamaker Tower going to be ready for?

Even if the planned thing was up and running today, it would probably struggle to attract any vast amounts of visitors. Why?

Because most people can already go to Portsdown Hill to get a rather good view of the city and the Solent without having to waste through endless traffic in order to get to Portsmouth and Southsea.

And as a result of the crazy happenings of September 11 last year, a lot of people still understandably feel best advised to stay on terra firma, long lesser. But why are we putting on a potential eyesore when we've got the Tricorn Centre up and running?

How wasn't that once dubbed as some sort of an exciting prospect for the future as well?

If the Tricorn really is the sort of yardstick that the millennium tower is to be measured against, then its future does not look very bright at all.

Ian Brazier
Dunedin Avenue, Drayton

TALKING POINT: Mindless vandalism

It is pointless having a 'bury your head in the sand' attitude to yobs

On a visit to Kingston Cemetery, Portsmouth, on September 4, I was very disgusted by the extent of desecration that has occurred.

I noticed a group of youths come into the cemetery through the George Street gateway, obviously with intent to 'play'.

The youngsters were aged from eight to 15.

I stayed there for about 15 minutes until they decided I wasn't going to leave and they then left via the same gate.

The reason I am writing this is because of Councillor Alex Stanley's comment in last Thursday's News when he said: 'There appears to be nothing we can do'.

Such a defeatist attitude by an elected councillor can only bode worse for the future.

There is much that can be done to reduce such problems at Kingston and elsewhere.

The first (and obvious) step would be to lock the George Street gates.

If councillors believe there is nothing they can do about such problems they really ought to resign and let others in who are prepared to provide cemetery staff with means of stopping the misuse of cemeteries.

A C Henderson
Clarence Parade, Southsea

. . . No doubt the people who cause all this distress and suffering enjoy all the benefits of life in a society they set out to disrupt.

Therefore, if and when caught, they should be excluded from society in some way as they obviously do not enhance it.

What does society offer them?

The license to travel, to receive medical treatment, to obtain credit, to watch TV etc.

Take those privileges away for a period and let them feel what it is like to be outcasts. They are a waste of space and resources and deserve nothing.

It's about time we got tough.

M Swadman
Fawcett Road, Southsea

What thrills do vandals get out of such sacrilege?

Dark dogma?

It was fascinating to read of the possible link between William Blake's *Jerusalem* and the 'green and pleasant land' of West Sussex.

Somerset generally lays claim to this distinctive as Blake was inspired by the legend of a youthful visit to Glastonbury by Jesus in the company of his merchant uncle, Joseph of Arimathea.

There is, however, more than a hint of irony to this revolutionary hymn, which is compounded by the fact that it was eventually set to music at the behest of Sir William Younghusband, famous for leading the 1904 British invasion of Tibet as part of his 'Fight for Right' campaign to fill the trenches during the opening years of the first world war.

Perhaps the vicar who refused to have *Jerusalem* sung during a wedding was on to something. According to Blake's radical beliefs, the dark satanic mills' symbolically referred to the churches of his day, with their merchantile dogmas and restrictive morality.

It is sad to see *The News* repeat the tired old myth of Blake's 'insanity'.

Although his work did become more obscure and challenging to his peers - we are presently witnessing an explosion of interest in the prophetic genius of this great Englishman.

I have often thought that more could be made of his local connections, so it is good to see that attention is being focused on these at last.

Mike Chiver
Bailey Avenue, Cosham

Caped crusader

It seems that your Tuesday columnist in *Something to Say* needs to do a little research before delving into the world of Batman and Robin.

Far from being characters from the 60s, they were

TO THE POINT

NUDITY: I think the Bishop of Portsmouth has shown a lack of judgement by granting permission for members of the Portsmouth Anglican Cathedral Choir to pose semi-clad in a calendar.

I know the precedent for posing semi-clad was set by the Womens' Institute and that many others have followed suit.

I also accept that there will be those who will say I'm just an old prude and "get a life" etc, but surely, with all the connotations of priests and choirboys, plus stories coming to light of the nanny abusers within various churches, the bishop should have had the sensitivity and wisdom not to have allowed this project to go ahead.

Yes, this project is being done for charity, and yes, that's a commendable, but in this case perhaps a little lateral thinking would have been useful on behalf of the bishop and his advisers.

Pat Costello (Mrs)
Clarendon Road, Southsea

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