

Mr A Lavender

**Code A**

21 April 2008

Dear Mr Lavender

**Elsie Hester Lavender Deceased:**

As you will no doubt be aware from Hampshire Police, they have passed to me details of a number of deaths that occurred some years ago at Gosport War Memorial Hospital, including details of the death of Mrs Lavender.

I have decided to open Inquests to look into how ten of these deaths occurred. One of these Inquests will concern Mrs Lavender.

The Police investigations into the deaths were very complex and took a number of years to complete. When their files were given to me there was an additional complication before I could get to the present stage; seven of the ten people concerned had been cremated and I had, by law, to obtain the formal consent of the Ministry of Justice to open Inquests on their deaths. This consent has now been given and I am in a position to make further progress.

To assist me in opening the Inquests I should be most grateful if you could kindly complete the enclosed questionnaire in relation to Mrs Lavender and return it to me as soon as you can. I enclose a stamped addressed envelope for your reply.

Once the Inquests have been opened, decisions will need to be taken about the logistics of organising ten complex Inquests. Issues such as who are to be called as witnesses, how long the Inquests will take, and where will they be held, will have to be resolved. As you will appreciate, it takes time to sort out these matters and, therefore, further progress will not happen overnight. I will,

however, do my best to keep you informed about key developments from your point of view.

The Inquests will put a great deal of pressure on the resources available to me and, of course, I must maintain an effective level of service as regards all the other deaths that I have to deal with at the same time as preparing for and holding these Inquests. Consequently, it has been agreed that these Inquests will be conducted on my behalf by another very experienced Coroner acting as my deputy – rather like the way Inquests into service deaths in the Middle East are being dealt with at the moment. That Coroner is to be Mr A M Bradley who is HM Coroner for North Hampshire. However, all administrative arrangements for the Inquests will be handled by my office and any correspondence about them – even when addressed to Mr Bradley – should, please, be sent to my office.

If I can assist you any further at this stage, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

David C Horsley  
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Email:

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