

INDEPENDENT INQUIRY

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Date: 31st March 2015

Inquiry into Infant Cremations at the Emstrey Crematorium, Shrewsbury.

This is my second update on progress with the inquiry, which I have been asked to provide at the end of March 2015.

It is supplemental to my first update, which I provided to you on 29th January.

Since my last update I have:

- With John Doyle, attended an evening meeting of the Action for Ashes Group, and there listened to the experiences and perspectives of a number of bereaved families. We have also met a number of families individually. We have now met six sets of bereaved parents in all. We have been very struck by their very real and acute sense of anguish that they do not have the ashes of their lost child as a tangible focus for their grieving, and, in some cases, anger at officialdom for, as they see it, depriving them of their child's remains.
- Sought and obtained the consent of the appropriate people to refer to the Mortonhall and Bonomy reports in my report.
- Exchanged correspondence with the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government, on progress on implementing in Scotland the recommendations of the Bonomy Commission.
- Continued correspondence with the Ministry of Justice on the legislative background to the inquiry.
- Considered legal advice obtained by the Council on the respective responsibilities under the relevant legislation of Shropshire Council and The Co-operative Funeralcare.
- Considered the written submissions of Shropshire Council on questions we have put and questioned officers on them.

- Considered the written submissions of The Co-operative Funeralcare on questions we have put, and interviewed crematorium staff, on the detail of those submissions.
- With John Doyle attended a meeting of local funeral directors and officiants, to explain the background and terms of reference to the inquiry and to seek their perspectives on it. We have also met one funeral director individually and we hope to meet more.
- Exchanged correspondence with the manufacturers of the cremators formerly in use at Emstrey crematorium on their technical capacity.
- Made enquiries of a number of crematoria of their experiences of infant cremations. We have now been in contact, either by visiting or by telephone, with six crematoria in all, for comparative purposes.
- Spoken with a representative of the SANDS charity, to gain their perspective on the issues that are the subject of the inquiry.
- Given a number of further press interviews, which I understand have received extensive coverage locally, regionally and nationally.
- Visited the appropriate official at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in London, to discuss the national context and background to the environmental regulatory regime.
- Obtained advice from the Council's appropriate regulatory officer on the impact of the regulatory regime for emissions into the atmosphere on how the cremators at Emstrey are and have been used for infant cremations.

I am still seeking certain additional information as to the maintenance and technical capacity of the cremation equipment formerly in use at the Emstrey Crematorium.

I have made contact with Dame Elish Angiolini, who conducted the investigation into infant cremations at the Mortonhall Crematorium in Edinburgh, and have arranged to meet her next month to discuss my draft conclusions, and to compare them with her own findings.

Assisted by John Doyle, I am now writing my report.

David Jenkins
Inquiry Chair

