

# Memorial for Mortonhall unveiled



It is now two years since the matter of babies ashes 'missing' from the council-owned Mortonhall Crematorium was first brought to light. This has been a harrowing story from the outset for the families in particular, but also a major problem for the Chief Executive of the council who has had to work hard to satisfy the demands of the bereaved families for information. In the words of one father The Edinburgh Reporter spoke to the council has managed to do that now, and he feels that personally he can look forward to a sense of closure once the memorial plans are fulfilled.



The investigations since 2012 have delved into the minute detail of the events which took place many years ago when babies died and their remains were cremated in the city without ashes being produced afterwards.

The council set up a working group along with SANDS Lothian, SiMBA, MACC and affected parents to try and resolve the matter. That resolution will now take two forms. The first is an offer of financial compensation to some of the affected families, and the second is a more tangible memorial, one at Mortonhall and one on a site elsewhere in the city.

Following discussions with all of those involved the council is proposing a memorial garden at Mortonhall and another memorial elsewhere when the location has been settled upon. Some families expressed a strong wish not to have to return to Mortonhall which held such sad memories for them, and so it is felt best to have two places where bereaved families can perhaps find some solace.

The Edinburgh Reporter spoke to the Chief Executive of the council and two of the affected parents :

The Mortonhall Multi-Agency Working Group has consulted landscape designers to come up with proposals for the Mortonhall site and a garden with a reflecting pool is one possibility suggested. The final decision on the design will lie with the families, and the council will then implement the landscaping work just as soon as possible, and hopefully around the time of the one year anniversary since the report written by Dame Elish Angiolini was published.

Sue Bruce said: " I am personally very encouraged with the progress made by the working group in dealing with both Dame Elish and Lord Bonomy's recommendations. I would like to pay tribute to the willingness of all participants especially the parent representatives for all their efforts."

Sara Fitzsimmons Executive Charity Director of SiMBA said: "Sitting on the group has reassured me that parents' views and considerations are first and foremost throughout all discussions. You can see the progress being made implementing Dame Elish's recommendations, one of those being the memorials. It was the parent's decision that there should be one at Mortonhall and a second one away from the grounds."

It is understood that the final form of the second memorial has to be agreed but suggestions have included fountains and sculptures.

Following the initial complaints to the council in 2012 the Chief Executive of the City of Edinburgh Council commissioned a report by Dame Elish to advise on what had happened and what could be done in future. That report contained many recommendations specific to Edinburgh council.

Dame Elish interviewed parents, crematorium staff both present and past, funeral directors and a range of experts. The report extends to over 600 pages.

A further report was produced by Lord Bonyon on behalf of The Scottish Government in June 2014 which made recommendations on what should happen nationally to ensure that this does not reoccur anywhere in Scotland.