

Hotel owner's death left it operating unlicensed for years

The family of a luxury hotel owner have revealed their shock at realising it had been serving alcohol without a valid licence for years following his death.

Giles Weaver, who owned Greywalls Hotel, in East Lothian, with his wife Ros, died in February 2020 – just weeks before the first Covid lockdown saw huge restrictions on the hospitality industry.

But it took until this month for licensing chiefs and his family to realise his name remained on the premises licence, making selling alcohol on the site against the law.

At a meeting of East Lothian Licensing Board earlier today Mr Weaver's son-in-law Dr Dominic Hoar (CORR) said he had been 'appalled' by the discovery.

And he fought back emotion as he recalled the traumatic time surrounding his father-in-law's death and the impact on his family.

He told the board Mr Weaver's daughter Flora was executor for her father following his death but had not transferred the licence, which was in her father's name, or informed the board of his passing as an oversight.

Dr Hoar said: "As an executor, she was also a grieving

daughter trying to arrange her father's funeral and support a grieving mother who was, at the time, being forced by Covid into isolation."

"The hotel was clearly going to have to shut so I can understand Flora's oversight."

Dr Hoar, a solicitor advocate, said while he and his wife Jo were partners on Greywall LLP which owns the hotel it had been run for a number of years by Inverlochy Castle Management International (ICMI) who oversaw its management including ensuring it held the correct licences.

He said quarterly meetings were held with ICMI for updates on the hotel in which he had been assured the licences were in place but said it appeared no one realised Mr Weaver was still the named premises licence holder.

He added it may be because Mr Weaver was occasionally referred to as Christopher, a first name only close family knew, that confusion had been created.

Dr Hoar told the board: "I would like to apologise unreservedly for this oversight. I am personally appalled this happened."

The board heard its licensing standards officer visited Greywalls, which sits on the edge of Muirfield Golf Course, Gullane, earlier this month and advised that it did not have a valid premises licence.

Alcohol sales were immediately stopped by the general manager and Dr Hoar said he has been working with ICMI and staff to ensure full training and understanding of the licence requirement are understood by everyone at the premises moving forward adding he would be "extremely vigilant".

Dr Hoar appeared before the board to request several occasional licences to allow it to sell alcohol again while it

arranges a new permanent premises licence.

Board chairman Councillor Lachlan Bruce thanked him for his apology and 'clear and open' explanation for the oversight regarding the licence.

He said: "People are human and mistakes happen and being willing to say 'we got it wrong' is something the board encourages and appreciates, Clearly this was a difficult time."

The board unanimously approved the occasional licences.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter