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Christopher Alder: police to exhume body of woman buried in grave

Investigation starts into council mix-up which led to the body of Grace Kamara being placed in ex-paratrooper's grave



📷 Christopher Alder died while being held in custody in a Hull police station in 1998, the body of Grace Kamara was mistakenly buried in his place. Photograph: PA

David Batty and agencies

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The exhumation of a woman mistakenly buried in the grave of a former paratrooper will also disturb the remains of the ex-soldier's niece, his family has warned.

Police are investigating how the blunder occurred after the body of Christopher Alder was discovered in a mortuary 11 years after his family thought they had buried him.

Alder, 37, choked to death while handcuffed and lying on the floor of a police station in Hull on 1 April 1998.

Alder's brother, Richard, revealed the ashes of his 25-year-old daughter Laura were scattered on Christopher's grave after she died in 2006.

It appears that an elderly woman called Grace Kamara was buried in his place in 2000. Alder's body was discovered in the place where her body was believed to have been stored.

Kamara died from natural causes in 1999, but her burial was delayed and finally scheduled for on 4 November. The mix-up apparently only came to light because her friends and family asked to see the body.

Richard Alder said: "We are distraught that Christopher's body was left for 11 years in a mortuary after we thought we had buried him.

"This has come as a sickening blow after everything we went through when Christopher died in police custody in 1998.

"Our shock and grief is made worse by the fact that when my daughter, Laura, died in 2006 her ashes were scattered on Christopher's grave at her request.

"The police have told us that the body of whoever is buried in Christopher's grave will have to be exhumed. This means that Laura's remains will also be disturbed and this just adds to our horror and pain at this time."

Alder called for a full, independent inquiry into the blunder: "This should never have happened and it must never be allowed to happen again."

Humberside Police confirmed a criminal investigation would take place. But chief constable Tim Hollis said that, given the history of the contact between Alder's family and the police, he had asked the neighbouring South Yorkshire force to undertake the inquiry.

Ten years ago, a coroner's jury returned a verdict of unlawful killing following a seven-week inquest into the circumstances surrounding Alder's death.

In 2002, five Humberside police officers went on trial accused of manslaughter and misconduct in public office, but were subsequently cleared of all charges on the orders of the judge at Teesside crown court.

Four years later, an Independent Police Complaints Commission report found that four of the officers present in the custody suite when the former paratrooper died were guilty of the "most serious neglect of duty", and the Alder family received an apology from Humberside police. However, the Police Federation said the officers involved "strongly disputed" the IPCC's conclusions.

Kamara was originally from Nigeria and friends had come from Africa for the funeral on Friday.

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