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The Coroner's powers arise when he is informed that ~~the~~ body of a person lying within his district and there is reasonable cause to suspect that the deceased:

- (1) has died a violent or an unnatural death; (Coroners Act 1988, s.8(1)(a))
- (2) has died a sudden death of which the cause is unknown; (s.8(1)(b)) or
- (3) has died in prison or in such place or in such circumstances as to require an inquest under any other Act. (s.8(1)(c))

An inquest must be held in those circumstances. The exception is where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a person has died a sudden death of which the cause is unknown. Then if a post mortem examination proves an inquest unnecessary, he may so dispense with an inquest. (s.19(3))

His powers, upon notification to the Registrar of death details to that effect, thereby cease. He is functus officio.

There is no duty to hold an inquest in the case of natural deaths.

The Coroner has no jurisdiction and therefore neither right nor duty to interfere. As has been judicially stated, it would be intolerable if the Coroner had power to intrude without adequate cause upon the privacy of a family in distress and to interfere with their arrangements for the funeral. (R -v- Price (1884) 12 Q.B.D. 2)

It follows that the Coroner has no power to retain nor release organs removed at post mortem.

He can intimate by practise or individually that he no longer has need to retain.

Such protocol being well known in this District.

The Coroners Rules were laid down to regulate the use of his powers once arisen and carried through to the conclusion of the inquest.

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On the cessation of the powers and duties following a natural cause death finding after post mortem, so the Rules cease to apply.

I took over as Acting Coroner without notice at Christmas 1991, for some six months. During that time I continued in practise as a Barrister.

Full-time appointment followed as from 1st July 1992.

From my records I can say that nine (9) deaths were reported to me, either by the hospital or the Registrar of Deaths, from January 1992 to the Spring of 1995.

All, following post mortem, were deemed deaths from natural causes. My duties and powers ceased upon notifying the particulars of each to the Registrar.

This office deals with some 4300 deaths per annum. There are three (3) administrative staff.

In addition there are five (5) Coroner's Officers covering a population of nearly a million, as it is impossible for me to carry out all my functions on my own.

They are employed by the Police Authority and are paid by it, and are independent of the Coroner. I receive information through, and make my inquiries through them.

They may visit the scene; receive a report from the Police or hospital; will make arrangements for the removal of the body to the mortuary and take evidence. They will notify the persons who have a right to be informed if a post mortem examination is to be made. (Rule 7 Coroners Rules 1984)

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They are not the Coroner, and must report and receive instructions, but will appear to assume transitory responsibility for what is being done, ordered or arranged.

All my Officers I have found to be polite, diplomatic and sympathetic to the bereaved, certainly at times of stress, and often in very difficult circumstances.

Finally, in all the reported cases, only Rules 5 to 8, 10, 11 and possibly 13 applied.