

Submission to the Leveson Inquiry

My full name is Graham Thornton Harvie Banks.

My son, Sam Banks, died in India on 25th June 2010 aged 20. A couple of days later the Sun carried a story that he had died after swimming in the Ganges. This was not true. The source of the story was a man named John Dodd, a retired journalist who lives near us. He had heard this rumoured in a village pub.

The story included a quotation attributed to me saying that Sam had swum in the Ganges. I never said any such thing. After we complained to the Sun Graham Dudman, the managing editor, came to see us in Hampshire to apologise in person. He said that the quotation had been made up by a sub-editor on the night shift who thought the story needed a parental quote to make it more convincing.

The story was reproduced in a number of papers including the Times of India and the London Evening Standard. It continued to appear on websites long after the event.

Our distress at this was because of the implication that Sam had died as a result of his own recklessness. The inquest eventually established that he died of an unidentified gastric disorder. Mr Dudman gave us £1,000 towards the fund we set up in Sam's name to provide bursaries for students in Bangladesh.

I offer this with the awareness that others have been treated far worse by the tabloid press, but because it gives a pretty precise snapshot of where the problems lie. The initial story came from village gossip and then a sub-editor, with no involvement in the story simply decided to embellish it with an invented quotation.

Mr Dudman acknowledged to us unreservedly that this was a serious breach of journalistic ethics.

Statement of Truth

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed Graham Banks

Date13/8/12