



WHY I'VE FORGIVEN MY ACID ATTACKER

One woman's humbling story of compassion

SEE
PAGES
26-27

WINTER CRISIS CRIPPLES NHS

++ Up to 55,000 operations postponed ++ Patients to be put on mixed wards ++ Senior doctors will man doors at A&E to turn away non-urgent cases

By **Sophie Borland, Claire Duffin**
and **James Tozer**

HOSPITALS were last night ordered to cancel thousands of operations to try to tackle a winter health crisis.

In an unprecedented move, NHS chiefs demanded radical action to free up beds and medical staff. Casualty units are under 'extreme and sustained' pressure with flu cases on the rise.

Up to 55,000 non-urgent operations will be postponed until February, along with thousands of outpatient appointments and scans.

Managers will be allowed to put patients on mixed-sex wards and consultants will be assigned to casualty units to assess patients on arrival. Anyone not judged to be seriously ill faces being turned away.

Confirmed cases of flu have risen 50 per cent in a week and experts are worried about an especially aggressive 'Australian' strain.

It was responsible for the worst flu outbreak in 50 years Down Under and has already claimed a number of lives in Ireland.

There were reports yesterday of waits of up to ten hours at casualty departments and managers issued social media alerts pleading with the public to stay away.

Two NHS bosses said the pressures were the worst in 30 years with one doctor apologising for "Third World" conditions.

The first week of January is always busy with

Turn to Page 2



THAT'S where one put it! Queen with crown she last wore in 1953

SEE PAGE FIVE