# Family dispute over former soldier's house reveals complex relationships



The family of Richard Joy, an 82-year-old former military memorabilia collector who passed away in May 2018, is embroiled in a legal battle over his £650,000 home located in Hillside Gardens, Harrow, north-west London. Joy, described by relatives as a 'recluse', had lived in the property his entire life and made headlines following his decision to gift the house to Mariia Romanyshyn, a 38-year-old Ukrainian waitress, just two years before his death.

The dispute centres on claims made by Martin Larney, Joy's cousin and executor of his estate, who is contesting the validity of the property transfer. Larney argues that Joy was mentally unfit to comprehend the implications of gifting his house at that time, citing his alleged cognitive frailty and dependence on Mrs Romanyshyn.

Richard Joy, who never married and had no children, was known for his eccentric personality and passion for collecting rare coins and military antiques. His life revolved around his large collection of books and memorabilia. He first met Mrs Romanyshyn at The Upper Crust café in 2011, where he would regularly visit. According to her, the two developed a close bond that led to Joy inviting her and her family to live in his home as his 'adopted family'.

Mrs Romanyshyn asserts that Joy gestured physically when he decided to gift her the house in 2016, reportedly stating, "The house is yours. I want you to keep the house." Furthermore, she testified in court that Mr Joy had expressed intentions to include her in his will as early as November 2011, stating his wish to leave her a diamond ring.

During the proceedings at Central London County Court, Judge Simon Monty KC heard that Joy's life had been one of solitude, with family members noting they had lost contact with him after 2012 as they struggled with their advancing age and health issues. Larney's barrister, Andrew Nicklin, claimed that Joy's final years were marked by a lack of mental acuity, as he was reportedly "vulnerable with apparent cognitive impairment" and heavily reliant on Mrs Romanyshyn for daily tasks such as shopping and healthcare.

In her defence, Mrs Romanyshyn described Joy as mentally sharp, capable of following complex television plots, such as those in the series 'Sherlock', and even engaging in chess with her daughter. She characterised her relationship with him as familial, emphasizing the affection and trust built over time. Her barrister, Lynne Counsell, contended that the bond they shared was significant and argued against the notion that Mrs Romanyshyn had an undue influence over Joy.

The legal complexities were further exacerbated by the 2011 will, under which Joy's estate was designated to be divided among his family members, including Larney and his mother Doreen Larney. However, after his death, it was revealed that he had signed away the house to Mrs Romanyshyn, leading to the ongoing court confrontation.

As the case continues to unfold, with evidence of Joy’s previous habits and interactions being examined, both sides await a ruling from Judge Monty, who will ascertain whether the property transfer was legitimate or if it should revert to Joy's estate for distribution according to his 2011 will.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This URL is the source of the article about Richard Joy's estate dispute, providing details on the legal battle over his £650,000 home in Harrow.
* <https://cases.stretto.com/public/x279/12472/PLEADINGS/1247209072380000000089.pdf> - Although unrelated to the specific case of Richard Joy, this document illustrates legal proceedings in property disputes, which can be relevant to understanding the complexities involved in such cases.
* <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10311201/> - This article discusses digital evidence in legal cases, which might be tangentially relevant to understanding legal procedures but does not directly support claims in the article about Richard Joy.
* <https://www.fvrd.ca/assets/About~the~FVRD/Documents/Popkum~History/Family%20Stories.pdf> - This document provides historical family stories and does not directly relate to the legal dispute over Richard Joy's estate.
* <https://cases.stretto.com/public/x247/12208/PLEADINGS/1220801312480000000020.pdf> - Similar to the first Stretto document, this provides insight into legal proceedings but does not specifically address the Richard Joy case.
* <https://waysandmeans.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Report-of-the-Impeachment-Inquiry-of-Joseph-R.-Biden-Jr.-President-of-the-United-States.pdf> - This document is unrelated to the Richard Joy case and pertains to a different legal matter entirely.