
Obituaries



Alwyn Byron Griffiths, formerly Consultant Psychiatrist, Halifax General Hospital

Alwyn Griffiths, who died on 17 January 1997, studied medicine at Leeds and qualified MRCS, LRCP in 1960. After training at Morgannwg Hospital

and in the Leeds Rotational Scheme, he moved to Halifax, where he played a large part in developing services in the recently opened Psychiatric Unit at the General Hospital. Early in his career, he published papers on a wide range of psychiatric topics, but later concentrated on a heavy clinical load and on teaching.

A powerful advocate of rigorous scientific assessment and of close monitoring of physical methods of treatment, he also strove throughout his working life to develop effective psychotherapeutic approaches. No one read more widely or deeply than he did in this search.

On meeting the challenge of patients with tinnitus, he worked, with characteristic energy, to find solutions. This led to relief from suffering in many cases and to a long association with the local tinnitus group, who honoured Dr Griffiths with a presentation when he retired.

He loved teaching and throughout his career held a weekly seminar. This was aimed primarily at trainee psychiatrists and GPs, but attracted other professionals such as probation officers and clergymen. His teaching contribution and advice on training were so valued by Halifax Health Authority that on retirement he was given an Honorary Consultant post and continued his weekly training sessions until his death.

A warm and compassionate doctor, he was nevertheless keen to establish the responsibility of patients for helping themselves and for their actions. Another area he felt strongly about was manipulation of language to conceal reality. He had an unerring ability to detect this in many spheres of life.

Although at times given to flamboyance and dramatic over-emphasis, he was devoid of self-importance and was always able to laugh at himself. He attributed his oratorical powers to his childhood years of listening to Welsh Chapel

preachers. Byron was a gifted singer and classical guitarist. He was an accomplished painter in oils, a lively and humorous draughtsman, a patriotic Welshman, a Francophile, a lover of the countryside and a gardener.

He is survived by his wife, Phyl, his three daughters and, latterly, three grandchildren.

M. A. HILL



Edward Henry Hare, Honorary Fellow of the College, former Editor of the British Journal of Psychiatry, Consultant Physician, Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospital

Edward Hare, who died suddenly on December 9, 1996, at the age of 79 was a most unusual man – a working NHS psychiatrist who was at

the same time an outstanding, but not widely known, scientist. He had a sharp analytical mind, considerable energy and perseverance, and an independent outlook which led him to take up subjects ignored by others but later to become popular.

As an epidemiologist, to which he brought an aptitude for mathematical statistics, he was particularly interested in schizophrenia, its frequency in different social settings and family relationships; and eventually provided strong evidence that schizophrenic breakdown was commonest in those born at the end of the year or in the first quarter of the next.

As a medical historian he studied the history of illnesses – not of doctors, hospitals or ideas – and showed that the clinical pictures of severe mental illness had sometimes suddenly emerged at different times over the centuries, and waxed and waned since. In the case of schizophrenia, this taken with the season-of-birth data pointed to the possibility that the onset of the psychosis was a delayed later effect of a viral infection in foetal life.

As a clinician of everyday practice he conducted a number of trials of new drug treatments, and reported on a variety of clinical topics – pseudohallucinations, the march of