

Obituary

Editor: Henry R. Rollin

EILEEN M. BROOKE, formerly Chief of Medical Statistics, Institut Universitaire de Médecine Sociale et Préventive, Lausanne, Switzerland (Corresponding Associate)

I had the privilege of knowing Miss Brooke and working with her during the time she spent at the World Health Organization.

The striking features which characterised her work and personality during that time were her endurance, persistence, boundless energy and common sense. She visited many countries and spoke to a variety of mental health workers and statisticians. In all of these contacts, as well as when working on data in Geneva, she was an excellent listener, extremely organised worker, broadly interested in many matters and willing to learn about health, international work, theology, new languages, cultural changes and many other subjects.

Miss Brooke never lost her capacity to teach and her painstaking attention to detail and concern about whether her listeners understood what she was saying were tell-tale marks of her early career as a teacher. She became a popular consultant because of her pragmatism, ceaseless effort and familiarity with mental health facts from all over the world.

Miss Brooke was precious to WHO's programmes because she was a statistician who liked to assemble data, enjoyed handling them and had the ability to present them without ever losing sight of the broader context in which these data were gathered. WHO's

programmes lose in Miss Brooke a pioneer and supporter of public health orientation in mental health programmes. Those who knew her personally lose even more by her disappearance because none of her publications can bring to life her devotion to her tasks, her sharp wit, lively intelligence and the often, so unexpected discoveries of warmth and deep human concern behind a stern facade of a formidable British lady.

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Eileen Brooke will be best remembered by British psychiatrists as co-author with G. C. Tooth of a paper published in the *Lancet* in 1961 in which it was claimed that, as the result of statistical analyses of current trends, the future needs of beds in British mental hospitals would be halved, that is, from 3.4 per thousand to 1.8 per thousand of the population.

There can be no doubt that this paper was influential in shaping Government policy with regard to the future of mental hospitals. Mr Enoch Powell, then the Minister of Health, in his famous, or infamous, Hospital Plan, 1962, foresaw that by 1975 half the hospitals should have been pulled down and their functions split between psychiatric units in general hospitals and community care.

Readers of the *Psychiatric Bulletin* will not need to be reminded that the heated controversy which greeted the publication of The Plan rumbles on unabated.