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People and places

Aubrey Lewis Unit, Royal Park Hospital

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Professor Aubrey Lewis (1965)

ing psychiatry. He trained in the USA, the Continent and Great Britain where he settled and became the major figure in the development of the Institute of Psychiatry and the principles of what came to be known as “Maudsley psychiatry” around the world.

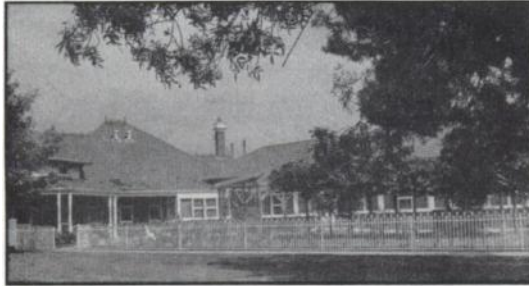
The Aubrey Lewis Unit is a 22-bedded clinical research ward which is the pivotal component of the Australian National Health & Medical Research Council (NH & MRC) Schizophrenia Research Unit established in 1988. This Unit is co-directed by the organisers of the conference, Professor B. Singh and Dr D. Copolov from the Monash Department of

A meeting was held at Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital in Melbourne, Australia on 2 March 1990 to celebrate the opening of a research ward at that hospital which commemorates the memory of Sir Aubrey Lewis. Sir Aubrey Lewis was an Adelaide-born psychiatrist who undertook his medical training in Australia before entering

Psychological Medicine and the Mental Health Research Institute of Victoria respectively, both of which are based at the Hospital.

The special guest at the meeting was Professor Michael Shepherd, Emeritus Professor of Epidemiological Psychiatry at the Institute of Psychiatry who presented the plenary lecture on the theme of “Sir Aubrey Lewis – An Australian Psychiatrist”. Professor Shepherd painted an evocative picture of the personality and characteristics of Sir Aubrey Lewis and then proceeded to describe the Adelaide in which Sir Aubrey Lewis grew up – a city which at the same period was home to a youthful Howard Florey and also Hugh Cairns. Each of these men were to achieve accolades in the United Kingdom, but only the latter two have been adequately acknowledged in the country of their birth.

Professor Shepherd highlighted Sir Aubrey’s scepticism as having its origins in Lewis’ Australian background, a theme that was picked up later in the meeting by another invited speaker, Professor Gordon Parker, Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at New South Wales University and for nine years editor of the *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*. He discussed the tendency of Australians to be truculent and resistant to control



The new Aubrey Lewis Unit for schizophrenia research and treatment

and authority, to be less inclined to compromise and more inclined to follow arguments to their logical conclusion. He also discussed the track-record of Australian psychiatric researchers, which he described as having significantly improved over the past two decades as assessed by publications in the major international psychiatric journals. Professor Parker was one of four Australian psychiatrists who spoke of four aspects of Sir Aubrey's background and work which are relevant to contemporary Australian psychiatry, namely his Australian background and his particular interests in social science, anthropology and philosophy. Contributing to this theme was Professor Scott Henderson, Director of the NH & MRC Social Psychiatry Unit, for the past decade based at the Australian National University in Canberra, who spoke on the contribution of the social sciences to psychiatry. The pivotal role played by Sir Aubrey Lewis in fostering the social sciences as a major contributor to the elucidation of psychiatric issues was acknowledged.

Two other Melbourne psychiatrists also contributed to the day, Dr Ed Harari, a psychiatrist with a major interest in philosophy, spoke of how the concept of paradox illuminated the practice of psychiatry and Dr Maurice Eisenbruch, a psychiatrist who had trained as an anthropologist in Cambridge under Gilbert Lewis, son of Sir Aubrey, spoke of his recent research into the concepts of mental illness as utilised by people in Cambodia – a country of particular importance to Australia because of its proximity and the tumultuous political events which have affected it in the past two decades.

The Director of Clinical Services at the Hospital Dr David Leonard, chaired the opening ceremony and introduced the Minister of Health for Victoria, Ms Caroline Hogg, who opened the Aubrey Lewis Ward. The Health Department of Victoria through its Office of Psychiatric Services provided \$A820,000 to refurbish and renovate a ward at the hospital to

fulfil its new task. The two major streams provided by the ward will be an assessment programme concentrating on psychotic patients requiring admission for the first time and more established schizophrenics who have been drug free for at least several months. These patients will undergo assessment using a comprehensive multidagnostic interview schedule developed at the hospital (RPMIP) and will participate in various psychological and biological studies being conducted by the Unit.

The second stream of the programme consists of a recovery phase which utilises a variety of techniques to assist patients to recover from their first episode of psychosis.

The Victoria Department of Health provides the staffing, medical, nursing and paramedical, for the research unit because it accepts that such a unit is a legitimate part of a busy 180-bedded hospital providing acute psychiatric services to a population of approximately half a million people in the central area of Melbourne. It was partly because of strong support from the State Government that the Federal Government through the NH & MRC decided to site the Schizophrenia Research Unit at Royal Park Hospital.

The meeting, which was attended by approximately 150 people, was closed by Dr Peter Eisen, Director of the Office of Psychiatric Services of the Health Department Victoria, who pledged continuing support for the Aubrey Lewis Unit.

The unit is the second at Royal Park Hospital to honour an internationally famous Australian psychiatrist; another ward in the hospital is named after John Cade, a former superintendent of the hospital who introduced lithium into psychiatric practice. Sir Aubrey Lewis, although he never returned to the country of his birth, was, by his own words and Professor Shepherd's assessment, significantly influenced by his Australian background. It seems fitting that he should be remembered in his home country by a clinical research ward concentrating on one of the major psychiatric disorders.

Sir Aubrey's major legacy to British psychiatry, and indirectly thereby to world psychiatry, was his development of the Maudsley Hospital and the Institute of Psychiatry at the University of London. This development was recognised, at the time of his retirement, as "probably the most academically brilliant, progressive and respected combination of clinical scholarship and critical integrity in the world".

We trust that the Aubrey Lewis Unit in Melbourne will influence psychiatrists in his homeland to continue to strive towards excellence in their research endeavours.