

# Obituary

## Ronald Eric Douglas Markillie

### Formerly Lecturer in Psychiatry at Leeds University Medical School



Ronald Markillie was born in London. On leaving school, he entered St Thomas' Hospital Medical School and qualified MB BS London and MRCS, LRCP in 1939. After house jobs he worked in the field of psychiatry and obtained the DPM in 1940. In 1942 he was conscripted into the army where he worked in the psychiatric service reaching the rank of Major. For a large part of his time in the army he was

stationed in Cairo, which he much enjoyed. During his army service he met many other psychiatrists who were working with service personnel or as civilians. They would later become prominent in different fields of psychiatry and some of them had an influence on Ronald's subsequent career. It was during this period that he became interested in psychoanalysis.

On demobilisation Ronald moved to Leeds to work in general psychiatry. In 1949 he was appointed to a senior registrar post at the Tavistock Clinic and it was here that his formal training in psychotherapy started. In 1950 he began personal analysis with Eva Rosenfeld and was supervised in his clinical work by Donald Winnicott and Roger Money-Kyrle.

In 1956 he moved back to Leeds as a lecturer in the Department of Psychiatry in the University of Leeds. At the same time he worked as a consultant in psychiatry to the Leeds Regional Health Authority, as a psychotherapist in the prison service and in private practice. In 1971, he was elected a Foundation Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. In 1976, he and Alan Dabbs, then a senior lecturer in clinical psychology, established the Diploma in Psychotherapy within the University Department of Psychiatry. This course provided initial training in psychotherapy to many individuals who were working in the mental health services of the Yorkshire region. A senior registrar post in psychotherapy was also created, one of the few outside London, which allowed a small number of doctors to be trained under Ronald's supervision and guidance.

Although group therapy had become less attractive to him in his later years of practice, he found he could apply some of its principles in management training for people working in industry and commerce.

Ronald Markillie retired from the University in 1982 but continued to work in clinical practice and in the supervision of trainees for a further 10 years. He and his wife, Willma, moved to live in Grassington, in the Yorkshire Dales, but later moved to the Thames Valley to be closer to their family. Wilma died in 2002. In his 80s Ronald became progressively more physically infirm. He wrote movingly and with psychoanalytic insight about his physical illness, the effects it had on his state of mind and his adaptation to it.

Apart from psychoanalysis he had diverse interests, in music, architecture, foreign travel and in his family. Surprisingly, in view of his reserved manner, he was something of a *bon viveur*, fond of food and wine, entertaining, stylish clothes and smart cars. He held strong religious convictions and was an adherent of the Baptist Church. His views were held firmly but he regarded them as personal convictions, not a set of beliefs which he sought to encourage others to share or to question. In some respects this reflected his whole personality. He was open to the ideas of others but reserved the right to make his own judgements of them. He retained his own opinions and expressed them freely and firmly but without the need to persuade others of their merits. He was uncomfortably frank with trainees at times but it was this intellectual integrity which made him such a powerful influence as a teacher. He was not a clappable man and kept professional institutions at arm's length.

His legacy is the trainees he left behind. Some became psychoanalysts and established a viable professional group in the north of England, but many more were people in the field of mental health who benefited from his influence in their everyday work. Those who worked with him and were taught by him cherish his memory. He leaves three children, a son and two daughters, who supported him devotedly in his last years.

**R. H. S. Mindham**

doi: 10.1192/pb.bp.111.037887