
Obituaries



Donald Brooksbank, John formerly Senior Medical Officer, Department of Health (1986–1994)

Donald Brooksbank was born and completed his basic medical training in Australia, obtaining his MBBS in 1966. He began further training in psychiatry in Sydney and elected to come to this country in 1971, obtaining the DPM and MRCPsych in 1972, and became a Fellow of the College in 1987.

Donald had decided to specialise in psychiatry prior to qualification and his ambition had always been to be a child psychiatrist. Although he underwent psychoanalysis, his approach was eclectic. As a consultant child psychiatrist his dedicated skills were highly regarded by patients and colleagues. He had a particular interest in child and adolescent suicide and parasuicide, and was tireless in his attempt to raise the profile of the needs of children and young people with mental health problems. In pursuit of this he joined the staff of the Department of Health in 1986 where he made a major contribution to the work of the Department on resources for those with learning disabilities and specialist adolescent units.

Donald chose to end his life on 5 August 1996. His life had been dogged by episodes of depression and latterly by ischaemic heart disease, and he decided to take early retirement in 1994. Nevertheless, he continued to enjoy the company of his friends and driving his ageing Rolls Royce. He inspired personal affection and professional trust and offered wisdom, thoughtfulness, and when 'on form', a great sense of fun.

J. J. BRADLEY

Members of the College may like to know that Dr Donald Brooksbank left the College a bequest of £10 000 to be used in relation to child and adolescent psychiatry research. This generous bequest will be used by the College's Research

Unit to support the printing and distribution of HoNOSCA, the HONOS rating scale which has been adapted for use with children and adolescents with mental health problems.

VANESSA CAMERON



Brian Herbert Kirman

Brian Kirman was born in Cleethorpes, on St. Valentine's Day 1910, the son of a local schoolmaster, part-time dairy and pig-farmer, who used Pavlovian conditioning to teach his animals to feed in response to his school whistle.

Brian studied medicine at King's College Hospital, and qualified MRCS, LRCP and MBBS in 1933, obtained his MD London in 1935 and DPM the following year. His first post was as house biochemist and house physician to the Diabetic Department, at King's, under Dr Lawrence. During this time Brian volunteered to act as a 'guinea pig' in a trial of an insulin ointment, for which a German firm were making claims which Lawrence knew to be false. As a result of Brian's ineffective self-anointment, the product was withdrawn from the market.

In 1938 Brian carried out a piece of research at Horton Hospital, Epsom, which confirmed the effectiveness of malaria therapy in arresting the damage to the brain in cerebral syphilis.

On the outbreak of the Second World War, Brian was accepted in the Royal Army Medical Corps, and served for five years in the UK and India. In India, Brian had care of the emaciated evacuees from Japanese prisoner of war camps following the surrender of Japan. In Scotland, at the Crichton Royal Hospital where, ultimately, he was the Psychiatric Specialist in clinical charge of the military wing, he became convinced of the

ineffectiveness of insulin coma therapy for schizophrenia.

On demobilisation Brian was based for 13 years at the Fountain Hospital, where Leslie Hilliard had been resident throughout the war as Physician Superintendent. Together they concentrated their efforts on the mildly retarded patients, whom they felt should never have been admitted in the first place.

Brian was successful in campaigning, with others, for German medical refugees to be allowed to work in British hospitals. One of them was the distinguished neuropathologist, Professor Meyer, who with Brian, Leonard Crome of the Fountain Hospital and Professor Polani, of Guy's Hospital, set up the Institute for Research into Mental Retardation. Brian felt the Welfare State should continuously inject resources into research and prevention as well as treatment and social provision but, sadly, the Institute was forced to close after a number of years for lack of money.

Brian wrote extensively in journals and books. He read a paper on 'Drugs in the Treatment of

Mental Deficiency', at the International Congress for the Scientific Study of Mental Retardation in Copenhagen in 1964, and on 'Prenatal Diagnosis of Mental Handicap' at the Third Congress of the same Association, in The Hague in 1973. His book, *The Mentally Handicapped Child*, was published in 1972, and he was co-author with Joan Bicknell of *Mental Handicap* in 1975.

Brian was elected a Foundation Fellow of the College in 1971. However, he never became closely involved in College matters generally, nor in the activities of the Specialist Section of the Psychiatry of Mental Handicap, in particular. As a result, Brian was known personally to only a few of its members.

In later life Brian suffered from severe Parkinsonism and glaucoma, both of which he bore stoically. He died in hospital in London, on 19 August 1996, following a fall. Brian is survived by two sons and a daughter by his first marriage, to Sheila Dunman.

W. ALAN HEATON-WARD