

## EXAMINATIONS—AUTUMN 1980

The next MRC Psych Examinations will take place on the following dates:—

*Preliminary Test*—Wednesday 24 September 1980  
(Closing date for receipt of entries—Wednesday 20 August 1980)

*Membership Examination*—  
Written Papers—Wednesday 5 November 1980  
Clinicals & Orals—Monday 10 to Thursday 13 November 1980.

(Closing date for receipt of entries—Wednesday 1 October 1980)

The entry fees are £35 and £55 respectively on each occasion. LATE OR INCOMPLETE ENTRIES ARE NOT ACCEPTED. The College does not give exemption from any part of the examinations. Candidates are reminded that they must pass the Membership Examination within five years of passing the Preliminary Test.

Details and entry forms are available from the Examinations Secretary.

## News Items

### *ECT Headset—Hazard Warning*

We have recently received a letter from a consultant psychiatrist in Dorset drawing our attention to a serious defect in an Ectron bilateral ECT headset. He writes:

'Following two instances of apparently spontaneous operation of an Ectron Duopulse ECT equipment, the machine and its associated headsets were examined in the Medical Physics Department of Southampton General Hospital.

The cause of the problem was found in one of the bilateral headsets, this being of the type in which the remote trigger button is situated on the underside of the white plastic cross-piece rather than on its end. Because of the mechanical arrangement of the trigger microswitch and the spring mechanism for the electrode arms with the plastic cross-piece, outward movement of the arms caused the switch to be operated. This phenomenon was quite repeatable even after dismantling and reassembling the headset.

It appeared that the problem was due to poor design rather than any obvious damage to the headset components and is therefore liable to occur with other units of the same type. The hazard is obvious; there is a risk of unintentional shocks to both operator and patient.'

The matter was brought to the attention of Dr Russell of Ectron Ltd. who pointed out that the set in question (Mk2 Duopulse) was of an old type of which few were made; in his opinion there was no risk to the operator, but the safety of headsets had always been a problem and they should be overhauled and refitted at least yearly. With Mark 4 there should be no danger at all. However, our correspondent still feels that caution is needed in using these sets.

### *'Soldier Without a Rifle'*\*

When David Stafford-Clark was made an Honorary Fellow of the College, those present heard much said in praise of his contribution to psychiatry—his famous television programmes of twenty years ago, which did so much good for our specialty, his wise guidance of many other television series and films, his many memorable lectures, his ever-popular *Psychiatry Today* and *Psychiatry for Students*. In wider fields we have had his *Five Questions in Search of an Answer*, sub-titled *Religion and Life: Some Inescapable Contradictions*, and we all know of his works of poetry, published and unpublished.

Now in his retirement he has turned his attention to fiction. The 'soldier without a rifle' of the title is a psychiatrist, at first serving at an RAF base during a critical period of the last war. The descriptions of the life of air-crew and of the psychiatrist's concern for their welfare and morale probably form the most successful part of the book. Going on a mission so as metaphorically to 'acquire a rifle' the psychiatrist forms a lasting friendship with an airman, and the latter part of the book deals with his ability to help his friend when involved in a tangle of attachments and responsibilities.

The RAF passages are clearly based on the author's experiences and memories, but besides this the psychiatrist, in civil life, is represented as working in a teaching hospital which appears to be in South London, and has sessions at a Psychiatric Institute. Moreover some of the scenes are set in India and Cyprus. One wonders whether all first novels are really autobiographical. A sequel to this one is promised by the publishers.

\*Published by Collins, 1979. £5.95.