

Obituary

Editor: Henry R. Rollin

ANNE NICOL MACKELLAR BRITTAI, formerly HM Senior Medical Commissioner Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland

Dr Anne Brittain's death in April marked in many ways the end of an era. Born in Glasgow in 1922, she was educated at school and University in her native city. She betokened an early legal as well as medical proclivity by obtaining a BL and DPA in 1945 before graduating MBChB in 1947. She was elected a foundation fellow of the College in 1971 and a FRCP(Ed) in 1981.

Her junior jobs were in medicine and psychiatry at the Southern General Hospital, Glasgow. Anne was wont to dwell on the memorable formative years she subsequently spent at the Glasgow Royal Mental Hospital in the 1950s. Dr Angus MacNiven (a former President of the RMPA), unique in personality and modest in exceptional erudition, was then the Physician Superintendent. Dr MacNiven held the view that real psychiatrists are born and not made. He had a gift of imparting clinical skill and acumen. Book learning, he insisted, could only be brought to life by an apprenticeship of experience and responsibility which entailed (as a must) 'living above the shop' and 'being open all hours'. Anne had the necessary flair.

She came from a gifted West Highland background. Her courteously disguised persistence, discernment and unthwartable resolve to get to the real nub of a perplexing human problem was enhanced by a remarkable memory and power of recall. This 'Miss Marple' approach was no mere chance. Her brother Robert, an erstwhile Physician Superintendent of the State Hospital at Carstairs, was a friend and acknowledged confidant of the Stanley Gardner of 'Perry Mason' fame. Anne in a sisterly way shared their interests and confidences.

In 1958 Anne Brittain became a Deputy Commissioner of the General Board of Control which in 1960 became the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland. She became a full Commissioner in 1963 and for about a decade before her retirement some five years ago was Senior Medical Commissioner and Vice-Chairman. As a deputy she visited boarded-out patients at their guardians all over Scotland from crowded city centre to remotest Hebridean croft. As a Senior Commissioner the complex and changing problems of mental and mental deficiency hospitals

were also within her responsible ambit, which ranged from the most difficult of individual patients, and media-prone minority protest groups, to far-reaching considerations of administration, policy concerning the public weal.

She held some definite reservations about the 're-cycling' of the centuries old concept of 'community care'. Her views about this shibboleth were in measured accordance with the title of a BBC programme, 'Everybody's Distant Relative ... But Nobody's Baby'.

The Commission, when she was vice-chairman in 1981, published a document prefaced by the words "The Commission respectfully urge all who are privileged to pursue the dedicated work of serving the needs of persons who suffer from mental disorder to ask themselves the question – Does the Patient Come First?" These words were the title of the publication. These words are Dr Anne Brittain's epitaph.

MMW

ROBERT DOUGAL, formerly Consultant and Medical Superintendent, Downshire Hospital, Downpatrick, Northern Ireland

Robert Dougal, who died recently, was born in Belfast in 1913. He studied medicine at Queen's University, Belfast and graduated MB, ChB, BAO in 1936. He was elected MRCPI in 1941 and proceeded to the fellowship in 1969.

However, having decided on a career in psychiatry he joined the staff of Downshire Hospital, Downpatrick as a junior assistant medical officer in 1936 and proceeded up the promotional ladder at the same hospital until he was elected consultant in 1950 and medical superintendent in 1968. He retired from both positions in 1979. He took the DPM (RCSI) in 1939, the MRCPsych in 1970 and was elected FRCPsych in 1972.

At the time he began work at Downshire Hospital, psychiatric treatment was largely custodial. There was a marked lack of medical staff, and a complete absence of such other disciplines as psychology or social work. In those early days Bob filled a number of roles. He was psychiatrist, general physician, radiologist, pathologist and pharmacist.

The psychotic illnesses were always his main interest, and he was active in the practice of all

physical methods of treatment. He introduced deep insulin therapy to the hospital, establishing a special small unit which he ran for several years with considerable success until it became outmoded with the appearance of modern psychotropic drugs.

During his lifetime Bob saw enormous changes in the style of hospital care, and great advances in psychiatric treatment generally. He always welcomed any change which was of benefit to the patient, and kept himself abreast of all the latest developments in the therapeutic field.

He served on many of the special committees set up by the Area Board and Department of Health concerned with the development of psychiatric services in Northern Ireland.

Bob had a large circle of friends in the Downpatrick area and in his spare time enjoyed his gardening and golf. Shortly after his retirement his wife, Maura, died. Very soon after her death their only son, Bobbie, was killed in a tragic accident while on holiday. These two events clouded his final years – blows from which he never really recovered.

KED

F. A. WHITLOCK, formerly Professor of Psychiatry, University of Queensland, Australia, and Honorary Consultant, St Lawrence's Hospital, Bodmin, Cornwall



After prep school at Malvern, which he recalled without much affection, Tony Whitlock attended Stowe School before proceeding to Queen's College, Cambridge and to St Thomas Hospital. During the war he served in the Indian Medical Service in North Africa and Italy. He was appointed as consultant dermatologist to West

Cornwall in 1947. Although he then secured training in psychiatry at the Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals, he retained a dermatological perspective throughout his professional life, which was reflected in his many contributions to works on the psychobiology of skin disease.

In 1958 he took up an appointment as consultant psychiatrist to the busy psychiatric unit at the Newcastle General Hospital. With the perceptive encouragement of Professor (later Sir) Martin Roth, he published a major work on *Criminal Responsibility and Mental Illness* in 1963, as well as clinical studies on hysteria and other topics. In 1964 he accepted the invitation and the challenge of estab-

lishing the first academic department of clinical psychiatry in the medical school of the University of Queensland, in Brisbane, Australia. There he secured the support of Sir Fred Schonell, and of his clinical and administrative colleagues and from small beginnings in Lawson House at the Brisbane General Hospital he built up a strong and active academic department.

Although generally reserved in his manner, he was trenchantly outspoken in his criticisms of some of the facilities available for the care of the mentally disordered. His sincerity of purpose, his commitment to the development of teaching for undergraduates and postgraduates, and his encouragement of research, both social and biological, won him rare affection and esteem, formally reflected in the award by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists of the Organon Research Prize in 1978.

These were busy and productive times, and his books and papers on suicide and parasuicide, road traffic accidents, and barbiturate abuse were of major practical and theoretical value, and also introduced a generation of Queensland psychiatrists to the virtues of clinical research and to the delights of true scholarship.

The chair fell under the shadow of financial restraints on his retirement and return to Cornwall in 1981, but the foundations were surely laid and it was a great satisfaction to him that the Department continued to prosper, as reflected in the re-establishment of the Chair in 1985.

He battled stoically against a recurrent illness, the result of a meningioma which had been previously removed in Queensland, producing until his last year a steady output of valuable contributions to works on psychosomatics, and forensic psychiatry and continuing an interest in post graduate teaching as honorary consultant to St Lawrence's Hospital, Bodmin. His incisive style is well reflected in many of the psychiatric entries in the *Oxford Companion to the Mind*.

Tony was an accomplished flautist, an enthusiastic carpenter and his labours bore much fruit in his beloved garden for he found it difficult to tolerate idleness in himself or others. His kindness and sensitivity were demonstrated by innumerable acts of generosity but were expressed most readily through his life's work and writings. His clear perception of priorities and his command of language remained intact until a late stage of the recurrent illness from which he was eventually released in the home he loved at Porthtowan on 21 May 1990, after devoted care by his wife, Margaret.

MAH

Frances Anthony (Tony) Whitlock was born in Rugby, UK in 1916 and died at his home in Cornwall on 21 May 1990, a few days after his 74th birthday.