

# Obituary

**Dr Stanley Smith, MB ChB Leeds (1942), MD Leeds (1947), MRCP London (1949), DPM London (1951), FRCP (1963), FRCPsych (Foundation 1972)**



Stanley Smith's granddaughter often teased him for having more letters after his name than he had in it, but to Stanley, qualifications really mattered. He was a consultant psychiatrist in Lancaster, Chairman of Lancaster Area Health Authority, a member of the Butler Committee on Mentally Abnormal Offenders and he also served on the Parole Board.

Stanley was born in a taxi, *en route* to a Belfast

hospital, in December 1918. His mother, a nurse, was visiting her parents, and his father had been posted missing in action the previous June. In the post-war chaos, Stanley remained in Ireland, being brought up in Portaferry by his grandparents, who were pillars of the local Presbyterian Church. On a return visit in 2000, Stanley recalled many childhood memories: egg-rolling at Easter, and almost drowning after 'borrowing' a boat to row across Strangford Lough. Academic success dates back to at least age 8, when he wrote proudly to his parents that he was top of his class both at the day school and at the Sunday school.

At the age of 10, he rejoined his parents and sisters in Doncaster, where he attended Doncaster Grammar School. For a boy with a strong Irish accent, accustomed to a very simple lifestyle, the move was an enormous culture shock. His father had remained in the army and had been steadily promoted, and his paternal grandfather was a well-known local businessman, alderman and magistrate. Perhaps Stanley's drive to succeed in life dates from this time.

He chose medicine as a career, but the threat of war distracted him from his pre-clinical studies at Leeds University. He joined the University Officer Training Corps and then the Territorial Army. He was sent to France in 1939, but the expected German attack never materialised and he was soon back in Leeds, completing his medical training. After graduation and house jobs at Leeds General Infirmary, he rejoined the army as a Medical Officer (6th Airborne Division) and on D-Day he flew into Normandy in a glider to take part in the battle for Pegasus Bridge.

After the war, he returned to work at Leeds General Infirmary, moving from general medicine to psychiatry when he realised that it offered better career opportunities. By then he had a wife, Julia (*née* Johnson), and a growing family to support. They moved to Bristol, where he had a Senior Medical Officer post at Barrow Hospital, and where the training scheme was excellent. Within 18 months, he had gained his Diploma of Psychological Medicine, the Gaskell Gold medal and a consultant post. He was involved in research into possible links

between endocrine abnormalities and mental illness, but probably his greatest contribution at this time was to help establish a day hospital in the centre of Bristol, only the second to exist in Britain.

In 1956, he accepted a post as Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Alberta, but he missed the UK more than he had expected and could never commit to emigrating.

At the end of 1957, he was appointed Medical Superintendent of Lancaster Moor Hospital, which at that time had 2800 in-patients, mostly in locked wards, and with sorely inadequate numbers of staff. He embarked on a programme of modernisation, in tune with the government's plan to treat mental illness primarily in the community. He also tried to implement the new idea of integrating psychiatric services with acute general services on a single site. At Lancaster Moor, the emptying wards and underused facilities presented an opportunity for this. They provided space for acute medicine, neurosurgery, orthopaedics and ophthalmology as well as child psychiatry, but there was always some stigma that these services were at the 'county asylum'. In the 1960s, the model of a purpose-built district general hospital, incorporating psychiatric services, was widely promoted, but such radical change attracted its own local opposition. Stanley had quickly realised that improved quality of care depended as much on medical politics as clinical expertise, so he developed his skills as an administrator. He served on the Manchester Hospital Board from 1959 to 1974, including 9 years as chairman of the Statutory Nursing Committee. From 1974 until 1986 he was first vice-chairman and then chairman of Lancaster Area Health Authority, overseeing considerable improvements in the facilities for midwifery, surgery, diagnostic radiology and geriatrics, yet all the time balancing the demands of the acute and chronic services. With his particular experience of psychiatry, he well understood the need to establish good community services before in-patients could be discharged.

With such a workload, it is surprising that he could make time for other things. In 1966, he was part of a World Health Organization teaching group based in Hyderabad, India. Then he served on the Butler Committee, gaining much knowledge about the more liberal Scandinavian approach to the treatment of mentally ill offenders, and he spent 2 years on the Parole Board. In 1983 he went to South Australia as part of a small group looking at the Australian mental health services. His wife joined him in Adelaide for some of his time there, and he always remembered those months with great affection.

Stanley enjoyed his work and retirement was not a concept that he embraced, particularly after he was widowed. He moved to London to be nearer his daughter, where he pursued his interests in history, law, politics and sport, and enjoyed the company of family and friends. This included the occasional pub crawl with his medical student granddaughter and sharing a fish and chip supper with his grandson. He died in his own home on 16 January 2010 at the age of 91 and is survived by his sons, Jeremy and Christopher, and his daughter, Judith.

**Christine Smith**

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