
Obituaries

John Henry Watkin, formerly Physician Superintendent, Horton Hospital, Epsom



John Henry, as he was invariably called by his intimates, was born in Wales on 28 September 1906 and died on 26 May 1994. He was proud of his Welsh background and still has relatives in Machynlleth with whom he kept in contact.

Educated in Merthyr Tydfil he graduated MBBS in 1930 from Barts and proceeded MD in 1933, followed by the DPM in 1936. The rest of his career was spent first in mental subnormality and then in general psychiatry. He was elected a founder fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in 1971.

His hospital appointments were mainly in the 'Home Counties' circuit of the old LCC.

He had worked at Darenth Park during and just after the last war and then moved to Leavesden in 1948 as Physician Superintendent for four years before finally being appointed to Horton in that rank around 1952.

John Henry was an excellent clinician and very much enjoyed teaching, both his own junior medical staff and the other, properly valued, members of his clinical teams.

He was much involved with the SW Thames peripatetic Registrar training scheme, based on four of the Epsom cluster of large mental hospitals: many of the rotating trainees from that scheme have cause to remember John Henry with gratitude, not only for his lucid and memorable teaching rounds but also for his kindness, and, at times, puckish sense of humour. He had a remarkable memory and knew most of the staff and patients by name, no mean feat at that time with around 1500 patients in the hospital.

His own particular interest lay in the field of the elderly mentally ill. At Horton he had an excellent geriatric admission placement in 'B' ward with well qualified nursing staff and very good multidisciplinary back-up.

John Henry was an excellent diagnostician so it was here that trainees saw the wide range of

acute mental manifestations of physical illness that can occur in the elderly. Patients came down from the catchment area hospitals, apparently quite seriously mentally ill and having been investigated and treated for their physical illness in 'B' ward many were able to return home having regained their normal mental health.

Those who moved into the long-stay wards became his particular concern – he was determined at all times to prevent them becoming forgotten people in back wards – and so the long-stay wards became part of his regular clinical rounds, to the great advantage of patients and staff alike.

John Henry enjoyed his chosen field and was always interested in young people starting out on a medical career, and they found in him an attentive, informed and wise counsellor, even though he was unable to go along with many of today's changes in the NHS.

Muriel, his first wife, died in 1976 but he is survived by Kitty, whom he married in 1985, and by his son, Michael.

RONA MACLEAN

Dr Joan Ridley (Obituary, *Psychiatric Bulletin*, August 1994, 18, 525–526)

Dr Terry Lear writes:

Joan was a good communicator and kept herself and her colleagues up to date with the psychiatric scenes in Australia and the UK and also with group analysis, which interested her since her training in the Institute of Group Analysis in London. She was a member of the Group Analytic Society (London) and a regular participant in the January workshops at her biennial visits to this country from Australia.

Before she went to Australia Joan was a consultant psychiatrist with responsibilities in the Northampton/Kettering districts (Oxford R H A). At that time all Northamptonshire in-patients were at St Crispin Hospital, Northampton (not St Peters Chertsey, Surrey, as stated in the August issue of the *Bulletin*). It was her vision which led to the establishment of a District General Hospital Acute Psychiatric Unit in Kettering which opened soon after her departure.

Joan Ridley's influence will remain for a long time.