

REPORTS AND PAMPHLETS

Handbook for Inceptors and Trainees in Psychiatry, edited by Thomas Bewley for the Education Committee of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. £1.25, including postage. Headley Brothers Limited, Ashford, Kent TN24 8HH.

One of the less foreseen consequences of the transformation of our former Association into a Royal College has been a proliferation of bureaucracy. The Education Committee of the College, sensitive to the danger that today's psychiatric trainee, bewildered by a remarkable cacophony of alphabetical clusters, might mistake the JCHPT for a Trotskyist splinter from the local COHSE branch, have provided a Baedeker's guide to the tortuous paths of Belgrave Wood.

The Handbook's foreword declares that its function is to bring together in one place 'useful information for doctors training to be psychiatrists'; and indeed no trainee worth his M.R.C.Psych., not to mention his Scottish Triple Qualification Board D.P.M., his London University M.Phil., and his Inceptorship will be under the old-fashioned illusion that such information is sufficiently provided in the established textbooks.

Today's psychiatric recruit is, it seems, expected to be familiar with the composition of the College Council and know all about the Committees, Sections and Divisions. If he is interested in a career with the DHSS (a career option nowhere mentioned in the otherwise detailed chapter on careers) he may perhaps do well to master the Sub-Committees also, and if he has ambitions on a Chair he should initiate himself into the mysteries of the Joint Committee on Higher Psychiatric Training.

Indeed, it is this last body which tends to haunt the Handbook. Its ruminations and deliberations on the fate of our recruit, once he has obtained the College mantle of Membership, are hinted at rather than clearly defined, and more than once the curious, worried or irritated trainee is advised to write to that body to discover more.

In fulfilling its task, the Handbook is straightforward and unembellished. There is a glossary of terms applicable to postgraduate training and education (in College terminology, unlike that of the Board of Film Censors, 'U' is applied to a psychiatric hospital 'Not Approved' for training), and there is a somewhat optimistic account of re-training schemes for women doctors. The information concerning the Membership Examination and the Preliminary Test is terse, cold and factual, but there is a sensible and helpful piece of advice from Professor Max Hamilton on how to present a case. The presence of this last contribution eloquently testifies to the actual standard of psychiatric training today, whereas much of the rest of the Handbook, unwittingly perhaps, exudes a rosy glow of comfortable optimism at odds with the reality outlined in another College publication, that by Peter Brook on *Psychiatrists in Training*.

If I have a personal grouse, it is regarding Alexander Walk's account of the formation of the College. It is, as one might expect, informative, detailed and interesting. It describes the formation of the RMPA, its outstanding personalities and its post-war development. The seven years of 'arduous negotiation' from 1964 to the founding of the College merit mention, but nowhere is there any reference to aspects of the College's birth. The Association of Psychiatrists in Training might have received some acknowledgement for the part it played in awakening junior psychiatrists to their responsibilities (and some blame, too, for its part in stimulating the proliferation of bodies, working parties, etc). I can safely note this omission now that my formal links with APIT have been severed. Perhaps it is one that will be remedied in the Handbook's second edition.

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The opinions expressed here are the personal ones of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the College.