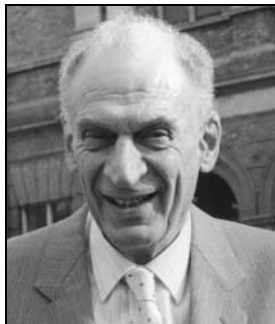


Obituaries

Sidney Crown



Formerly Consultant Psychiatrist at the London Hospital, Whitechapel

It is very difficult to write an obituary about Sidney Crown. The challenge to all obituarists is to summarise a long life in a few pithy, well-chosen words, but even a modern Shakespeare would find it impossible to summarise the life of Sidney.

When I first met him more than 40 years ago, I found it impossible to place him and, in the nosiness of youth, asked others to help me out. Eventually, a colleague suggested that he was 'someone from the old school'. I have pondered on this ever since and can only conclude that the school concerned was the Sidney Crown Academy of Excellence, which was notable in only having one pupil. At what other place would you be able to accommodate someone who had the insight of a sage, the visage of Hippocrates, the wit of a mischievous imp, the outspokenness of a prophet, the kindness of a saint, the interest of a polymath, and the physical stamina of an Emil Zátopek? One thing is certain: the Sidney Crown Academy of Excellence would have had to be in London. Samuel Johnson may never have tired of London, but not even he could have embraced it with quite the enthusiasm of Sidney Crown.

Sidney's life story showed all these characteristics. He first trained in psychology in South Africa after his family was evacuated there during the Second World War. He then trained as a psychiatrist at the Maudsley Hospital and won the Gaskell Gold Medal, and this, accompanied by Hans Eysenck and Aubrey Lewis as his supervisors, gave him a clear head start up the academic ladder. He joined the psychiatric department at the Middlesex Hospital shortly after it had been set up under the supervision of Professor Denis Hill, and was subsequently trained by Eliot Slater at 'Queen Square' (then the National Hospital for Nervous Diseases, now the Institute of Neurology). But this was not the conventional academic pathway to ivory-tower stardom that it appeared to be from the outside. While working for Eliot Slater, Sidney underwent full psychoanalysis – how he managed to incorporate both Freud and Slater into his daily thinking seems to me to be quite amazing – and then became a consultant at the London Hospital, Whitechapel. There he continued to practise both psychiatry and psychotherapy for four decades with the patients in the catchment area; and these were certainly not the more 'typical' patients who presented for psychoanalysis in some other parts of London. While at the Middlesex Hospital, Sidney developed (with Arthur Crisp) the Middlesex Hospital Questionnaire, which enjoyed great favour as both a personality and mental state assessment. In fact, it probably incorporated both and it was one of the most important precursors of what has followed in many different forms since.

Sidney edited the *British Journal of Clinical Psychology* (subsequently to become *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory,*

Research and Practice), and then joined the *British Journal of Psychiatry* as Book Review Editor. He held this position for the magnificent period of 46 years, which will probably represent an all-time record for anyone at the Royal College of Psychiatrists. He was assiduous, collaborative and innovative in this role and many will have benefited from his wise advice. The first review I ever sent in was in the style of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, full of strange sentences and neologisms. Sidney never beat about the bush and he wrote back smartly, 'Sorry, this won't work – we can't have it' – and he was right. Not for him the gentle oblique refusal, I got the straight uppercut. But he was basically the kindest of men. Many at the College will be familiar with his avuncular concern for all the staff there, quite irrespective of their status, and for his many runs on behalf of charities. He was a regular runner of the London Marathon from the date it first started and completed his last marathon at the age of 75. He also took great interest in his local charity, Fitzrovia Youth in Action, where he was a trustee since its inception. This again illustrates his continued concern with ordinary people in London, the real passion of his long career.

Sidney and his wife June, whom he met at the Middlesex Hospital as a medical student, were a happy and utterly devoted couple. They have three children, a consultant endocrinologist, a musician and a lawyer, showing a range of talents that reflects Sidney's own eclectic interests. The love and respect that all his family felt for Sidney was expressed movingly and evocatively by the readings and commemorative performances of his family at a service at the Royal College of Physicians in November last year.

And so for the final school report. 'I am very sorry to inform you that on 12 September 2009, at the age of 85, the only pupil from the Sidney Crown Academy of Excellence died suddenly. The school will now close and there is no plan to open it again.'

Peter Tyrer

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David Hazell Clark



Formerly Physician Superintendent, Fulbourn Hospital, Cambridge

When I went to Fulbourn Hospital on psychiatric placement, Friday mornings began with a group session for all medical staff, students included. At my first meeting, the atmosphere was tense with criticism of the medical superintendent, David Clark. Never having seen David before and unable to recognise him, I found myself saying: 'It