

# Obituary

**Daphne Margaret Shepherd**  
Formerly a Corresponding Associate of a non-medical section of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association (RMPA), the precursor of today's Royal College of Psychiatrists



Daphne was born at West Park Hospital, Epsom, Surrey, on 12 December 1924, the elder of the two children of Dr C. E. Alan Shepherd (1890–1960) and Eleanor Gladys Shepherd née Brown. She was educated at Westonbirt School, an independent Church of England boarding school for girls near Tetbury, Gloucestershire, and at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, from 1943 to 1946. There she

read English Language and Literature as a pupil of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis and Lord David Cecil, among others. She graduated with Second Class Honours.

Undergraduate Oxford in World War Two tended to be female dominated as men, unless exempted, were only admitted to short 6-month courses before military service. Happy memories included drifting down the Cherwell in a punt reading *Beowulf* and attending an Oxford University Dramatic Society production of *The Winter's Tale* in Exeter gardens as the guest of her tutor. In a monsoon-like downpour the show went remorselessly on and the saturated audience remained faithful to the end, suffering for art.

After graduating, Daphne spent 2 years at the BBC working on *Woman's Hour*, which she disliked, and then as secretary and assistant to a producer of *Third Programme Talks*, which was much more enjoyable.

After acquiring a Diploma in Social Administration from the Oxford Delegacy for Social Studies (with distinction) and a

Mental Health Certificate from the London School of Economics, Daphne qualified as a psychiatric social worker. She worked for the Hampshire Child Guidance service for 11 years, becoming head social worker, and then joined the University of Southampton in 1963 as Lecturer in Social Casework.

During a sabbatical term in 1973 spent at the Medical Research Council's Clinical Psychiatry Unit at Chichester (Director Peter Sainsbury), she investigated the aftermath of suicide for the surviving spouse and children. This enquiry, at that time unique, proved to be so rewarding and stimulating that it led her to further research into aspects of suicide, in particular an investigation into the etymology of the word 'suicide' in the Romance languages. She retired from the University in 1983 but continued to work, teaching research methodology and supervising higher degrees.

Daphne was a founder member of the Mental Health Act Commission which had been set up under the Mental Health Act 1983. She served for its first 2 years. Her connection with the Royal College of Psychiatrists began when she joined the precursor of the College, the Royal Medico-Psychological Association (RMPA), in 1967 as a Corresponding Associate. When the RMPA became a medical Royal College in 1970 the non-medical members became Foundation Affiliates of the new College and no further additions were made to this class of member. With Daphne Shepherd's death only ten of this exclusive group remain.

Her leisure interests included reading, listening to music, particularly opera and chamber music, spinning, weaving, playing bridge, walking in the Scottish Highlands, where she had a time-share apartment, and cultivating numerous friendships.

She died on 3 August 2012 at her cottage in Twyford, Hampshire, where she had lived alone for 50 years.

**Brian Barraclough MD**

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