

## People and places

### Opening of the Academic Sub-Department of Psychological Medicine in North Wales

The Academic Sub-Department of Psychological Medicine in North Wales was opened on 19 October 1990 by Professor Andrew Sims, President, The Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Professor Sims commented that the development of the new Academic Unit at The North Wales Hospital, Denbigh, was a “gleam of light” in an era of “unrelieved gloom” within the National Health Service and the University system. He congratulated all concerned for their farsightedness at a time of great stringency.

#### *Aims and function*

The setting up of the Sub-Department of Psychological Medicine by the University of Wales College of Medicine was conceived jointly with the Clwyd

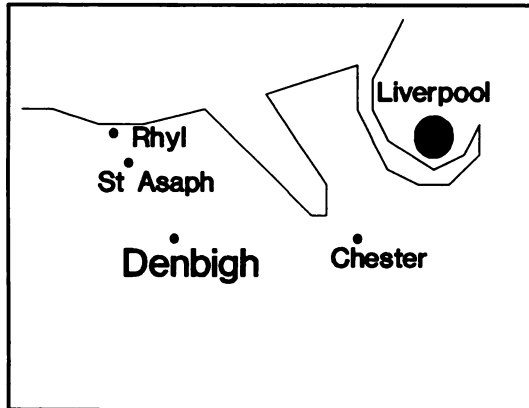
and Gwynedd Health Authorities and the Welsh Office. The Sub-Department comprises two Senior Lecturers (Dr Greg Wilkinson\* and Dr David Healy) and supporting research, administrative and secretarial staff.

The aim is to promote academic psychiatry by the development of research and the establishment of comprehensive training programmes. The principal task is to encourage and foster the growth of psychiatry in North Wales and to provide the means of fulfilling the considerable potential that there is in the area.

The Sub-Department looks to its parent department (Head of Department, Professor Peter McGuffin) in the University of Wales College of Medicine, Cardiff, for support. In addition, close links have been developed with the University



*The Opening Ceremony (left to right): Sir Herbert Duthie (Provost, University of Wales College of Medicine), Professor Peter McGuffin (Department of Psychological Medicine, University of Wales College of Medicine), Dr Greg Wilkinson (Director, Academic Sub-department of Psychological Medicine), Professor Andrew Sims (President, The Royal College of Psychiatrists), Dr Mabel Tannahill (Regional Adviser, The Royal College of Psychiatrists), Dr David Healy (Deputy Director, Academic Sub-Department of Psychological Medicine) and Professor Michael Shepherd (Institute of Psychiatry, London).*



College of North Wales, Bangor, and the North Wales Institute of Higher Education, Wrexham. A traditional association with the Department of Psychiatry, University of Liverpool is also being maintained and strengthened.

\*Dr Wilkinson has been promoted to Reader in Psychological Medicine as from 1 December 1990.

### Future of psychological medicine

Professor Michael Shepherd, Institute of Psychiatry, London, gave the inaugural lecture: 'Psychological Medicine: Past Imperfect, Future Conditional'.

Professor Shepherd began by outlining how the decline of the mental hospital, the patent deficiencies in most community-care programmes and the crisis in the Health Service had combined to raise questions about the future prospects of psychiatry. An overview of psychiatry's post-war evolution indicated why traditional theory and practice were proving inadequate to meet current demands and to sustain an effective professional identity.

Professor Shepherd stressed that the relatively small proportion of medically qualified research workers tackling mental health topics also gave cause for concern. But his main conclusion was that the growing claims of other disciplines, non-medical as well as medical, on the subject matter of psychiatry will be irresistible without a broadening of the education, outlook and function of its practitioners.

*Psychiatric Bulletin* (1991), 15, 32-33

## William Cullen's bicentenary

R. E. KENDELL, Professor of Psychiatry, University of Edinburgh

William Cullen (1710-1790) was the greatest teacher of clinical medicine in Britain in the 18th century. He was born in Hamilton in Lanarkshire and began his career in Glasgow where he held the chair of chemistry and was one of the founders of the medical school. In 1755 he moved to Edinburgh with its already flourishing medical school and its new hospital, the Royal Infirmary, and there he held in succession the chairs of chemistry, the institutes (theory) of medicine and the practice of physic. Together with Alexander Monroe he made Edinburgh the most famous medical school in the Western world and students came from far and wide to be taught by him - from England, Scotland and Ireland, from the Americas and the West Indies and from the Continent. Like Boerhaave, his reputation rested mainly on his gifts as a teacher and it is clear that his students idolised him. Benjamin Rush, the founder of the first medical school in the New World in Philadelphia, America's first psychiatrist and one of the signatories of the American Declaration of Independence, wrote of him that "It is scarcely

possible to do justice to this great man's Character either as a scholar, a physician, or a Man".

Although Cullen wrote widely on many subjects from the chemistry of crystalline solids to materia medica, he is of interest to psychiatrists mainly because it was he who coined the term neurosis. Cullen believed that excesses or deficiencies, local or general, of "nervous energy" were the root cause of most disease and in the elaborately tiered nosology of disease he published in 1769 neuroses were one of the four Linnean orders he recognised. Although his neuroses encompassed what we would now regard as neurological, neurotic and psychotic disorders, and included hysteria, hypochondriasis, convulsions, apoplexy and the vesaniae (an old Roman term for insanity), it also embraced many other conditions which we now regard as quite unrelated, like dyspnoea, diabetes, pertussis, tetanus and cholera. Cullen's over elaborate classification of disease did not long survive his death, but his term neurosis remained in use throughout the 19th century as a convenient title for an ill defined group of 'nervous'