

Obituaries

Editor: Henry R. Rollin

RAMON FRANCIS NORRIS, Consultant Psychiatrist, Highcroft Hospital, Birmingham

Ramon Norris died after a brief illness on 10 December 1992.

Ray was educated at Handsworth Grammar School and went on to graduate MB ChB at Birmingham University Medical School in 1958. After house jobs at Dudley Road Hospital he undertook his National Service in the Medical Branch of the RAF, seeing active service in Aden. Upon leaving the forces he quickly decided on a career in psychiatry which he found both intellectually stimulating and challenging. He obtained the DPM (Birm) in 1966 and was elected MRCPsych in 1971.

He gave much time to sitting on various committees and was Chairman of the Division of Psychiatry for two years.

During his latter years, he chose mainly to work directly with patients and their general practitioners. He felt that those who must live with the newly evolving services should be allowed the opportunity to develop them as they saw fit.

His approach was one of kindly authority and charming humour which never failed to impress alike his patients and colleagues.

Unfortunately, his expected early death from a myocardial infarct precluded the retirement he was beginning to look forward to and plan for.

He is survived by his sister Irene.

R. A. WALL

CHRISTOPHER OUNSTED, formerly Consultant Psychiatrist and Director of The Human Development Research Unit at the Park Hospital for Children, Oxford

In 1957 Kit Ounsted launched the Park Hospital as a “place for children to be well in” in the former neurosis unit of the Warneford Hospital, a house that once belonged to the Bishop. History has it that it was intended to be a shared facility but Ounsted, with prescience that matched his wisdom and verve, introduced a group of tiresome children who immediately effected a purge of the adult incumbents. The group of over a thousand children with epilepsy that he had then assembled for his DM thesis became the source of his many seminal papers on childhood epilepsy. His technique was so fine as to allow him to write (with Janet Lindsay) his last

follow-up of a sub-group of 100 children with temporal lobe epilepsy 40 years later without the outcome of a single case being unknown.

He called his interest “Developmental Medicine”, a “science of biographies”. It accorded with his deviationism in referring to himself as a physician. He believed that he was only doing what all physicians do which was to understand their patients enough to be able to ease their sickness. It described the range of his writings from *On Fetal Growth Rate* written with his wife Margaret, to studies of the breakdown of parenting in the form of abuse; it afforded the most elegant euphemism yet devised for working with the mentally handicapped. It was a clear statement of policy that the concerns of psychiatrist working with children should be very broad.

His teaching was at its best in the convention of the Oxford tutorial. He would not necessarily be as well informed as his tutee of the matter in hand yet it would be they who would emerge, from minutes to hours later feeling more conversant with the meaning of their own data, or better equipped to pursue a line of thought or therapy. He organised, for two years, a startling two weeks course in developmental medicine for the medical students in which he called upon distinguished colleagues from all over the country to provide first-hand accounts of their work. There remains a select band who remember with affection the camaraderie and the interest of those courses which sadly fell into the maw of the greater good, much to Ounsted’s distress.

Although infinitely patient with the individuals who looked to him, he was not clubbable and resisted those aspects of his work that would require participation in large groups. This prevented his science and teaching from having a broader impact, but he strongly encouraged others to travel widely in the dissemination of their knowledge and reminded them that that was the original nature of universities.

He was an early promoter of the work of Henry Kempe on child battering. Kempe, who had lived briefly as a child refugee in Oxford, visited Ounsted. There grew up at once a warm relationship based upon mutual and deep understanding of the complexities of this aspect of human behaviour. Ounsted engaged in clinical work and researched the process and pathways of abuse through the work of excellent and devoted staff. The hospital became known as a centre where difficult issues of abuse