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Alexander Walk (1901–1982)

Alexander Walk was more deeply involved with the RMPA during its 46 year existence than anyone else. He was interested in the history of the Association but less enthusiastic about the development to a College than his colleagues. His papers on many aspects of the old Association were invaluable for the present Author. Mrs. Peggy Walk who was for a number of years the 'Registrar' (Secretary or Executive Director for her time) kindly supplied me with a copy of his complete list of publications, which is appended to this short account of his life.

Alex Walk was more deeply involved with the RMPA during its 46 year existence than anyone else. He had been appointed an Assistant Editor of the Journal of Mental Science at the age of 27 in 1928 and continued to work for the Journal till his death aged 81. He was co-editor from 1930 to 1973 and then continued as Associate Editor till 1982. He filled every important post in the RMPA where he was (while simultaneously holding other duties) Librarian from 1945 to 1970. In that post he built up the College's stock of antiquarian and historical books particularly those from the nineteenth century. He was President of the RMPA (1961–1962). He was also Secretary and later Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee which advised on the Mental Health Act 1959 and was Parliamentary Reporter until 1982. He was the RMPA representative on the General Medical Council and from 1953 to 1968. He was also a member of the General Nursing Council and the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers of which he was President from 1959–1961.

He was born in London in 1901, but received a good deal of his early education in Antwerp. He was a remarkable linguist speaking several European languages as well as both Modern and Biblical Hebrew. He was awarded a scholarship to St

Bartholomew's Hospital, where he had a distinguished undergraduate career and graduated MB, BS (London) in 1923. As a student he was attracted to psychiatry and at the earliest opportunity he joined what was then the London County Council mental health service, first as a locum and then as a permanent member of the medical staff. He rose rapidly in the medical hierarchy and served in several of the mental hospitals of that service. In 1949 he became Medical Superintendent of Cane Hill Hospital, a post he filled with distinction until his retirement in 1962. He had proceeded to obtain his MD (London) in 1926, was the Gaskell medallist in 1929 and was elected to the honorary fellowship of the College in 1964. Alexander Walk died in 1982. As a scholar, historian, man of letters and linguist, his contribution to British psychiatry in general and to the RMPA and College were immense. As a person he was a rather asocial but kindly man who hid his light under a bushel. His contributions to the history of the Association would be hard to surpass.

References

Obituary, *Bulletin of the Royal College of Psychiatrists*, **6**, 141.

Alexander Walk's publications

1. History of psychiatry – general

(a) Published papers

Some Aspects of the Moral Treatment of the Insane up to 1854

Read at a Meeting of the Section of Psychiatry, Royal Society of Medicine, 9 February 1954.

Journal of Mental Science (1954) **100**, 807–837.

On the State of Lunacy

Presidential Address to the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, 21 March 1959

Journal of Mental Science (1959) **441**, 879–892.

The History of Mental Nursing

Presidential Address at the One Hundred and Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association held at Cane Hill Hospital, 13 July 1960.

Journal of Mental Science (1961) **446**, 1–17.

The Pre-History of Child Psychiatry

Read at a Meeting of the Child Psychiatry Section of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, 12 February 1964

British Journal of Psychiatry (1964) **110**, 754–767.

Mental Hospitals

From “The Evolution of Hospitals in Britain” (ed. F.N.L. Poynter) Pitman Medical Publishing, 1964, 123–146.

What we Thought About it All

From “Daniel McNaghton, His Trial and the Aftermath”. (ed. D.J. West & A. Walk). Gaskell Books (Published for *British Journal of Psychiatry*) 1977, 113–128.

Lincoln and Non-Restraint

Read at the Quarterly Meeting of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, Lincoln, 6 May 1970. *British Journal of Psychiatry* (1970) **117**, 481–486.

Medico-Psychologists, Maudsley and the Maudsley

The third Squibb History of Psychiatry Oration, delivered at The Institute of Psychiatry, 17 July 1975. *British Journal of Psychiatry* (1976) **118**, 19–30.

(b) Draft papers and minor writings

A Psychiatric Scrapbook for the year 1882

Reconstruction of a talk given at a meeting of the South Eastern Division of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, held at Cane Hill Hospital, 22 April 1952.

The Fathers and Mothers of Mental Nursing. Three (out of four) articles from the “Hillsman”, Cane Hill Hospital Staff Magazine (cyclostyled):

No.1 Not traced

No.2 Sir William and Lady Ellis. Vol.2, No.7, July/August 1954, 2–5

No.3 Dr Conolly and Miss Powell. Vol. 2, No.8, September 1954, 2–4

No.4 George and Katherine Jepson at the Retreat. Vol.2, No. 8, October, 1954, 1–3.

History of Mental Hospitals: The Last 150 Years

Draft of paper read at the National Association for Mental Health Meeting, 29 June 1956.

Psychiatric Pioneers and Precursors

Reconstructed from handwritten draft and notes for paper read at Royal Medico-Psychological Association Lecture Course, 10 February 1958.

History of Mental Hospitals with Special Reference to Mental Nursing

Draft of Address to the National Association of Chief Male Nurses, 1958.

The North of England in Psychiatric History

Abstract of a paper read at the Annual Meeting of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, Sheffield, 7 July 1968.

A Note on John Conolly

Concluding remarks at a Meeting of the Section of Psychiatry, Royal Society of Medicine, 10 May 1966, to commemorate the Centenary of John Conolly’s death. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* (1967) **60**, 8.

John Conolly and His Historical Background

Incomplete handwritten draft found among Alex Walk’s papers. (?For a paper read at St. Bernard’s Hospital during Conolly commemorative celebrations, 1966).

The History of the Rise and Fall of the Concept of “Moral Insanity”.

Handwritten draft found among Alex Walk’s papers.

Historical Outline of Terms Defining Mental Deficiency

Handwritten draft of part of a paper found among Alex Walk’s papers.

Mental Hospital Libraries in England

Draft of a talk (? Given at a Red Cross Meeting in the 1960s)

2. History of the RMPA and its forerunners.

(a) RMPA History, 1841–1968

Gloucester and the Beginnings of the RMPA

(In collaboration with Dr D. Lindsay Walker)

Read by Dr Walk as President of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, at the Association’s Quarterly Meeting, held at Gloucester, 3 May 1961.

Journal of Mental Science (1961) **449**, 603–632.

“Forty Years of Wanderings”. *The Medico-Psychological Association, 1855–1894*
British Journal of Psychiatry, **132**, 530–547.

The Royal Medico-Psychological Association, 1900–1968
Handwritten draft article found among Alex Walk’s papers.

(b) Short papers on special aspects of RMPA history

The Centenary of the Journal of Mental Science
Journal of Mental Science (1953) **417**, 633–637

The Royal Medico-Psychological Association – a Historical Note
(a handout, pre-1963)

The Royal Medico-Psychological Association – A Historical Note
(a handout, post-1963)

The History of the South Eastern Division
Abstract of a paper read at a special meeting of the South Eastern Division, 11 June 1970.
British Journal of Psychiatry Supplement, October 1970, 10–12.

Farewell to Chandos Street
British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, December 1974, 2–4.

Arrival in Belgrave Square
British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, June 1975, 3–5.

Recollections and Impressions: 1. The Charter Meeting 1926.
British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, October 1976, 5–10.

Recollections and Impressions: 2. The Annual Meeting 1976.
British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, November 1976, 5–10.

Annual Meetings Recalled. 1. Twenty Five Years Ago.
British Journal of Psychiatry Bulletin, September 1977, 1–3.

More Annual Meetings Recalled. 2. One Hundred Years Ago.
British Journal of Psychiatry Bulletin, October 1977, 8–10.

Number Seventeen
British Journal of Psychiatry Bulletin, April 1980, 55–57.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists.
No.5 in the “Royal College” series, *St. Bartholomew’s Hospital Journal* (1973) **77**, No.5,
135–139.

3. History of Cane Hill Hospital

Report of the Physician Superintendent, Cane Hill Hospital, for the years 1948–1949 and 1949–1950

(This was the first report under the National Health Service, and Dr Walk's first report as Physician Superintendent. It has a historical section as well as a very full description of the Hospital's current activities).

The Seventieth Anniversary of Cane Hill

The Hillsman, October 1953, 2–4.

(Later in the same month, on Monday 5th October, 1953, Dr Walk gave a talk on "How Cane Hill Started", which, he said, would be far more than the "bare bones" of this article).

Cane Hill and "Mental Health" Policy, 1882

Written by Dr Walk and read for him at a Meeting of the South Eastern Division, 17 June, 1982. *British Journal of Psychiatry Bulletin*, September 1983, 161–164.

Cane Hill Hospital Badge and Names of Hospital Wards

Notes from Physician's Report, December 1950.

4. Miscellaneous published items

Obituary of John R. Lord, by Dr Walk and three others

Journal of Mental Science (1931) **319**, 670–679.

Observations on Convulsion Therapy with Triazol 156, by Alexander Walk and W. Mayer Gross. *Journal of Mental Science* (1938) **84**, 637–662.

The Royal Medico-Psychological Association's "Memorandum of Evidence" to the Royal Commission on the Law Relating to Mental Illness and Mental Deficiency

Drafted by Dr Walk, as Secretary of the Evidence Committee.

Journal of Mental Science (1954) **421**, 994–1020.

Mental Illness

Read at the Royal Society of Health's Conference on Mental Illness and Mental Deficiency, 9 October 1957. Report of the proceedings, 7–13.

Catalogue: "Psychiatry and Mental Health in Britain. A Historical Exhibition, 4th March to 9th July, 1963. Held at the Wellcome Library. (Organised by Dr Walk for the Wellcome Trust)

Mental Illness under the Mental Health Act (letter to the Editor)

British Journal of Psychiatry (1965) **111**, 446–447.

Intelligence of Patients in Subnormality Hospitals (letter to the Editor).

British Journal of Psychiatry (1965), **111**, 547–548.

Years of Grace (Tribute to Miss Grace Tingle, written jointly with Miss Natalie Cobbing)

British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, September 1973, 10.

British Journal of Psychiatry Special Publications No.6. Recent Developments in Psychogeriatrics. A Symposium edited by D.W. Kay and Alexander Walk.

Superintendents and Clinical Psychiatrists (letter to the Editor).
British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, June 1973, 17.

Cycles in the Care of the Insane (letter to the Editor).
British Journal of Psychiatry (1979) 134, 54

5. Reference list of Dr Walk's collections of psychiatric history excerpts from News and Notes and the Bulletin of the *British Journal of Psychiatry*.

(a) Psychiatry in the 1870s

Community Care
British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, December 1972, 6–7.

Chloral Hydrate
British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, January 1973, 12.

Maudsley's Presidential Address to the M.P.A., 1871
British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, April 1973, 10–11.

Unlocked Doors
Brit.J.Psychiat .News and Notes, May 1973, 5–6.

Home Truths and "Hygiene" Myths
British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, August 1973, 10–11.

Lord Derby on Idiocy and Insanity, the Budget and Pauper Lunatics
British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, January 1974, 14.

Electrotherapy
British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, 1975, 5–6.

Two questions in Forensic Psychiatry
British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, March 1975, 7–8.

Syphilis and Insanity – so near...!
British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, December 1975, 20–21.

G. Fielding Blandford on Moral Treatment
British Journal of Psychiatry Bulletin, May 1978, 93–94.

Kilvert's Mad Folk (In collaboration with Edward Hare)
British Journal of Psychiatry Bulletin, October 1979, 150–153.

(b) Psychiatry in the 1880s

Private Asylums

British Journal of Psychiatry Bulletin, July 1980, 104–105.

The President's Assassin and the Queen's Would-be Assassin

British Journal of Psychiatry Bulletin, July 1981, 127–129.

A Great Presidential Address (Daniel Hack-Tuke, 1881)

British Journal of Psychiatry Bulletin, November 1981, 205–206.

(c) One Hundred and Twenty Years of our Journal

Prospectus.

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Some passages from the first issue.

British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, January 1974, 13–14.

Passages from Volume I.

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More passages from Volume I, 1854.

British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, April 1974, 12.

1854. The Non-Constraint Controversy Revived.

British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, July 1974, 17.

1854. Words and Works.

British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, November 1974, 17.

(d) Fifty Years Ago

The Macmillan Report

British Journal of Psychiatry News and Notes, December 1976, 6–8.