

HoPSIG NEWS and NOTES

The newsletter of the Royal College of Psychiatrists' History of Psychiatry Special Interest Group

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Editorial

This is the first newsletter of the newly re-formed History of Psychiatry Special Interest Group (HoPSIG), and to begin with will be a natural continuation of the Newsletter of the Friends of the College Archives, with Fiona Subotsky and Francis Maunze as editors.

As the website is up and running we do not need to repeat all the information there, and so we need your contributions!

These could be:

- Articles: relating to the history of psychiatry and its study. We are not competing with major journals, so not too long (500-1500 words) and with internally consistent referencing (or follow *BJPsych Bulletin* format).
- Reflections and memories: inspiring, interesting or even shocking ideas, people, or places of historical interest
- Reviews: old or new books, exhibitions, conferences or websites etc
- Notices of upcoming events
- Puzzle corner questions
- Letters

Illustrations are always good, but please avoid copyright issues. Next copy deadline is the end of January 2016.

And meanwhile, welcome to George Ikkos, who will be the new Honorary Archivist for the College, starting in October 2015.

Derek Richter (1907-1995)
Pioneer in Neuroscience and Neuropsychiatry

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The Mysterious Silver Tray

In July 2014 I made my first visit to the new premises of the College in Prescot Street to meet Dr Fiona Subotsky, Honorary Archivist, to discuss historical interests. As I arrived in the Library for my meeting with Fiona I found the Chief Executive, Vanessa Cameron, and the Archivist, Francis Maunze, puzzling over several items of silver they had just unwrapped after transfer from the former College building in Belgrave Square. Who were the donors of these valuable gifts to the College? By a remarkable coincidence I was able to assist with two of the pieces, one of which, a silver tray, is the catalyst for this article.



Fig. 1 Memorial Tray

Early in my neurological career in order to study water, electrolyte, folate, and vitamin B12 metabolism in some neuropsychiatric disorders I had an honorary attachment (1965-1969) to the MRC Neuropsychiatry Unit of which Derek Richter (figure 2) was Director. I had contributed to this tray which was presented to him on his retirement in 1971 and which had been donated to the College, of which he was an Honorary Fellow (1980), by his second wife, Molly, after his death in 1995. He is distinguished for his original contributions to neurochemistry, his pioneering national and international application of neuroscience to the study and relief of brain and mental disorders, and his charitable efforts to further these objectives.



Fig. 2 Derek Richter

Oxford, Munich and Cambridge.

Derek won an Open Scholarship from Oundle School to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he achieved a First Class Honours Degree in Chemistry (1929). With his interest in organic chemistry he proceeded to the laboratory of the distinguished Heinrich Wieland in Munich where he obtained his PhD (1931) by studying oxidative chain reactions. This attracted the attention of JBS Haldane in Cambridge, who facilitated his appointment as a Research Assistant in the famous Biochemical Laboratory of Professor Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins, where he now worked on biological oxidations, including the metabolism of adrenaline. His main achievement during his biochemical period in Cambridge in the 1930s was the discovery of the monoamine oxidase enzyme in collaboration with Hermann Blaschko. Later, in the post-war era, this contributed to the development of a new field of biological research in mental illness, especially mood disorders, involving monoamines such as serotonin and dopamine, including the use of monoamine oxidase inhibitors as antidepressants.

The Maudsley Hospital

In 1938 Professor Lucien Golla invited Richter to join him as a biochemist in the Central Pathological Laboratory at the Maudsley Hospital, which at that time included the neurophysiologist William Grey Walter, and the neuropathologist Alfred Meyer. Richter was further influenced by his encounters with Edward Mapother, Eliot Slater, William Sargent and Aubrey Lewis, among others, such that when Golla invited him to join his move to the Burden Neurological Institute in Bristol in 1939, Derek declined.

Plans were now overtaken by the outbreak of World War II. The Maudsley Hospital became a neurological centre for wounded soldiers as part of the First London General Hospital, which included King's College Hospital, run by the Ministry of Health. Many of the Maudsley staff were transferred to the Mill Hill Emergency Hospital in North London where Richter was invited to establish a small Research Laboratory, which was orientated towards the study of war neurosis or "effort syndrome". By now he had decided to train in medicine and he was fortunate to be allowed to do this while running the Laboratory part-time. He therefore enrolled at St. Bartholomew's Hospital from where he qualified in 1945 just as the war was ending.

Cardiff and the Neuropsychiatric Research Centre

After brief junior clinical posts in Cambridge Richter was anxious to get back to research and successfully applied in 1947 for the post of Director of Research at Whitchurch Hospital, the mental hospital for Cardiff and its Medical School. Whitchurch, like Wakefield and Claybury Asylums previously, was one of the few mental hospitals in the country that undertook neuropsychiatric research, thanks to the enlightened first Superintendent, Dr Goodall, who initiated and completed the laboratories prior to the First World War. Prior to the Second World War the Director of Research had been Juda Quastel, a distinguished neurochemist, who then left to become Professor of Biochemistry in Montreal. After the Second World War the laboratory was completely run down and only one staff member remained. Richter had to start from scratch and this he did with the help of grants from the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Rockefeller Foundation.

Recognising the lack of funding for neuropsychiatric research he initiated with the help

of business and clinical contacts, notably Denis Hill and Walter Maclay, the Mental Health Research Fund (MHRF), of which he became the first Secretary under the Chairmanship of Ian Henderson and later Sir Geoffrey Vickers. From modest beginnings the MHRF, now Foundation, has grown to become a major UK funder of neuropsychiatric research.

With the advent of the NHS in 1948 the administration of the Research Laboratories passed from Whitchurch Hospital to the Regional Hospital Board with affiliation to the University of Wales and its Medical School in Cardiff. In the late 1940s and early 1950s Richter gradually expanded the Neuropsychiatric Research Centre, as it was now called, into a multidisciplinary team of 22 staff members for the study of brain and mental function and disorders. This neuroscientific approach included basic neurochemical studies in sleep, wakefulness and emotional excitement; neurophysiology, neuropathology and physics, including the first clinical EEG machine in Wales, encouraged by the work of Grey Walter, who was now nearby in Bristol. Prominent among the neuroscientists in the Cardiff group were James Crossland (acetylcholine), Rex Dawson (lactate and phospholipids), Roy Hullin (subcellular fractionation) and Mickey Gaitonde (proteins). Richter's view was that the most important discovery of that period was the rapid turnover of brain proteins in relation to functional activity, which dispelled the prevailing view that proteins in the brain had only a structural function.

Carshalton, Epsom and the MRC Neuropsychiatry Unit

By 1957 the MRC was sufficiently impressed that it agreed to take over responsibility for the Centre. Furthermore the MRC agreed to move the renamed 'MRC Neuropsychiatry Unit' to better laboratory accommodation in Carshalton, Surrey, close to the mental hospital facilities in the Epsom area to promote greater clinical collaboration, which had been lacking at Whitchurch. The move occurred in 1960 and the multidisciplinary neuroscientific research concept continued to flourish there until Richter's retirement and the closure of the Unit in 1971.

Amongst the numerous achievements of that decade the work of Brian Meldrum (neurophysiologist) and Jim Brierly (neuropathologist) on status epilepticus and cerebral anoxia were notable. The Unit became a mecca for foreign neuroscientists, for example,

Robert Balazs (Hungary) working on metabolic compartmentation and brain development, Mickey Gaitonde (India) on brain proteins/nucleoproteins, and Jeff Watkins (Australia) on neurotransmitters. Some returned to establish neuroscience centres in their own or other countries, e.g. Alfonso Mangoni in Milan, Hans Mohler in Zurich and Rudi Vrba (famous for his escape from Auschwitz) in Vancouver. A special Clinical Investigation Unit was established at West Park Hospital, Epsom, led by Alec Copen and David Shaw, who successfully developed the serotonergic hypothesis of depression and established lithium for the treatment and prophylaxis of manic-depressive illness, with the valuable support of Maryse Metcalfe (neuropsychologist). From Richter's Unit Tony Johnson became the leading statistician in the UK for brain and mental diseases.

National and International Achievements

From his earliest days in Cardiff Richter was keen to develop national and international collaboration and communication in neuroscience. He initiated the first two International Neurochemical Symposia in Bristol (1952) and Oxford (1954). These led to the founding of: The Journal of Neurochemistry of which he became its first joint (but main) Editor in 1956, and The International Society of Neurochemistry of which he was the first Treasurer in 1967 and later Chairman of the Council. He was a member of the first Commissions on Neurochemistry of the World Federation of Neurology (1959) and the World Health Organisation (1968).

He was a founding Council member of the International Brain Research Organisation (IBRO) in 1960. After his retirement from the MRC Unit he became Secretary General of IBRO in 1972, during which he initiated IBRO News and also the IBRO multidisciplinary journal, Neuroscience. As a Council member he saw the need to develop national Chapters as had already occurred in the USA, USSR and Japan. He therefore took the lead in promoting, consulting and establishing in 1968 the UK Brain Research Association (BRA), which in 1996 changed its name to the British Neuroscience Association (BNA).

During the late 1970s Richter was the prime mover in establishing the 'Biological Psychiatry Group' at the Royal College of Psychiatrists and was elected its first Chairman with Tim Crowe as Secretary.

Aware of the growing problem of drug addiction in the 1960s Richter was a catalyst for the foundation

of the Association for the Prevention of Addiction (APA) of which he was the first Chairman. With his wife, Molly, he also saw the need to provide suitable accommodation for the rehabilitation of patients being discharged from the Epsom Mental Hospitals. This led to the establishment of the charitable “South Lodge”, which continues to promote local community support.

Conclusions

Derek Richter’s remarkable career progressed from chemistry through organic chemistry and biochemistry to medicine and neuropsychiatry. A common thread throughout was his dedication to research. He made original and seminal contributions to neurochemistry. Equally important was his commitment to bringing together basic and clinical research scientists in a multi-disciplinary team for the study and relief of brain and mental disorders, with impressive results. In the process he was the first to develop the concept of Neuroscience in the UK as well as pioneering so-called ‘translational research’, which is so fashionable today. His style was to select those individuals he thought had outstanding research potential and to let them get on with their own research interests, but with the maximum of interaction and collaboration between different disciplines. This he had learned earlier in his career in the laboratory of Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins in Cambridge.

He had a national and international outlook and a compassionate social conscience. His Research Centre/Unit attracted and trained numerous foreign (and UK) graduates, some of whom returned to develop research centres in neuroscience in their own or other countries. He took a leading role in founding the Mental Health Research Fund, the Association for the Prevention of Addiction, and the Brain Research Association, now the British Neuroscience Association. He contributed to the founding of the International Society of Neurochemistry and the International Brain Research Organisation, becoming Secretary General of the latter. In his long productive career, which in its own way was ‘multidisciplinary’, he made or influenced many early, valuable and lasting contributions to the complex and now rapidly developing field of neuropsychiatry.

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Acknowledgments

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Henry Dicks and a Singular Patient

RHS Mindham

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Professors of Psychiatry at Leeds

There had been professors of psychiatry at Leeds intermittently since the University became independent in 1904 but these posts were part-time and were invariably filled by the Medical Superintendents of the West Riding Pauper Lunatic Asylum at Wakefield (later Stanley Royd Hospital) and were entirely concerned with teaching. Shortly after the Second World War the Nuffield Foundation offered to support the establishment of a chair in psychiatry with an annual grant of £2,500 for six years and in 1946 Dr Henry Dicks was appointed. However he found his role in Leeds to be unsatisfactory for both professional and domestic reasons and resigned his post in 1948 to work in London.¹ Behind this account lies a much more colourful story.

Earlier Career

Henry Dicks had been born and brought up in Riga, Latvia. His father was a British citizen engaged in the timber trade and his mother was German. The family moved in cultured polyglot circles in Riga and this influenced Dicks' early life profoundly. He spoke German, Russian and French as well as English and the family travelled widely in Europe. In 1917 Dicks was visiting Saint Petersburg when the Russian Revolution began.

His medical education was in England, first at Cambridge and then at St Bartholomew’s Hospital, qualifying in 1926, becoming a member of the

Royal College of Physicians in 1927 and graduating MD in 1930. In spite of this strong medical background he specialised in psychiatry. By 1939 he was physician and assistant medical director of the Tavistock Clinic, London, which specialised in psychotherapy. At the outbreak of war he joined the psychiatric branch of the Royal Army Medical Corps and then served in many parts of the world.

Rudolf Hess

On 10 May 1941 Rudolf Hess, deputy to Hitler, flew to Scotland in a small plane piloted by himself purportedly to discuss terms for a cessation of hostilities between the fascist states of Europe and the Allies.² He chose to go to Scotland because he wanted to speak to the Duke of Hamilton whom he mistakenly believed to be sympathetic to his cause. Before he could land the plane he ran out of petrol and he landed by parachute at Floors Farm in Eaglesham, East Renfrewshire. The Home Guard arrested him and took him first to their headquarters at Busby and then to the police station at Giffnock.³



Rudolf Hess

Henry Dicks was delegated to interview Hess and was clearly chosen on account of his command of German, his knowledge of psychiatry, and that he was a serving officer in the British Army. The authorities wanted to know if Hess's claim to be an envoy of the Axis powers was genuine and through him to explore current thinking in the German High Command. They hoped to understand better the 'collective madness' of the German leadership and whether they wished to come to terms with the British because they were about to attack their erstwhile allies the Russians. It was also possible that Hess's flight had not been authorised and had been made on his own initiative: this was how the German government reported the event to the public.

Dicks interviewed Hess at an MI6 'safe house' in Surrey on 2 June 1941. Contrary to the public portrayal of Hess as square-jawed and strong in physique and in personality Dicks' first impression was that he was a tormented schizoid psychopath, an admirer of what he saw as the English lifestyle, dress and manners, and along with many of his colleagues in the German government searching for a reassuring source of authority. Hess became increasingly unsettled in prison and was noted by Dicks to be anxious about his forthcoming interview with the Lord Chancellor John Simon, and feared that he might lose self-control. A little later Hess threw himself over the stair bannister during the night in an apparent attempt at suicide and broke his leg. He was transferred to the care of Dr JR Rees on 15 July 1941 and subsequently spent the remainder of the war at Maidiff Court Hospital in Abergavenny. Neither Dicks nor Rees thought him to be insane.

Following conviction at the Nuremberg War Trials, Hess was sent to Spandau prison where he died in 1987 at the age of 93, said to have committed suicide.

After the war Dicks said of Hess:

'He was pathetic and pitiful rather than menacing or unpleasant. We who surrounded him always felt that this was a very insecure man who had been greatly damaged in his earlier life and if only better means had existed, if only he hadn't been such an important prisoner of state, we might have done more for him.'

It would have been interesting to have been an observer at Dicks' interview for the post of Nuffield Professor of Psychiatry - those who followed him had much more ordinary backgrounds. In his subsequent career Dicks became an authority on the psycho-therapeutic management of couples.

I am grateful to Melissa Hogenboom of the BBC who helped me to gather some of the material for this account.

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On Holiday in...VIENNA

Claire Hilton and Fiona Subotsky

On holiday in Vienna, you might find some historical sights of psychiatric interest. This brief account is not comprehensive, so please let us know if you have others to add!



Berggasse 19, on the ground floor

Sigmund Freud lived and worked at [Berggasse 19](#) for many years: one entry door on the first floor was for personal use, the other for patients. Most of his belongings, however, are in his house in London where he spent the last year of his life after fleeing from the Nazis in 1938. His personal belongings exhibited in Vienna were largely donated by his daughter Anna when the museum opened in 1971, but the extensive exhibition cannot fully compensate for the lack of artefacts. Some empty space is used for art exhibitions, currently the controversial work of [Brandt Junceau](#), including his white plaster naked upside down full size headless male torso suspended in the centre of the museum. Something about us confronting our sexuality psychoanalytically, perhaps?

Another mental illness story, that of the Empress Elizabeth (1837-98), called Sisi by those close to her, is told in a moving and fascinating exhibition at the [Sisi Museum](#) in the Hofburg Palace. Biographies and exhibitions reach different conclusions about the nature of her symptoms and diagnoses. An Empress with psychiatric difficulties has some parallels with the lives of King George III and Diana Princess of Wales: it is hardly surprising

that popular biographical films have been made about all of them.

One stumbles across less well known historical figures and memorials, some of which are disturbing. The life and suicide of the Viennese artist Richard Gerstl (1883-1908) is remembered alongside his paintings in the Leopold Museum. Victor Frankl (1905-97), psychiatrist, neurologist, Holocaust survivor and founder of logotherapy, sometimes called the 'Third Viennese School of psychotherapy', was buried in Vienna's vast Zentralfriedhof.

Elsewhere in the Zentralfriedhof is a communal grave and memorial to mentally and physically disabled children who perished in the Nazi euthanasia programme. An account of the atrocities and the perpetrator helps explain this.

Austria was incorporated into Nazi Germany in 1938 and its medical system took up the 'T4' programme - a eugenic mission, beyond sterilization, to terminate 'life unworthy of life'. Falling into this category were mentally ill and mentally handicapped people especially if already in institutions; later any misfit of race or behaviour was included. The gas killing systems were initially developed for this purpose.

At that time, child psychiatrist Heinrich Gross (1915-2005) worked in Am Spiegelgrund, the children's section of Vienna's large mental hospital, [Am Steinhof](#) (still in use as a hospital). The process was as follows: first, children were noted as possible 'qualifying cases'. Those deemed suitable were sent to special paediatric hospitals for 'treatment', often far from home. There they were put on starvation diets, given sedatives orally and by injection, subjected to painful and risky experiments and exposed to cold. One of Gross's patients who survived described him coming to the wards to select children - first 'the bedwetters, or harelips or the slow thinkers ... We did not dare ask where they were taken. We never saw them again.'

Gross saw the opportunity for personal scientific advancement in making painful investigations such as pneumo-encephalography without medical indication and collecting interesting specimens. Over 700 children died in this way at Spiegelgrund, with Gross's signature on 238 of the death certificates.



Children's Memorial

After the war Gross returned and made his name as a forensic expert. He published the results of his research on the remains of the child victims, and boasted that his brain collection was the finest in the world. The child victims' brains were held for decades in the hospital and only buried finally in 2002.

Dr Heinrich Gross was charged three times in Austria, but no trial was completed, the final trial being suspended on the grounds of his advanced age and dementia. He died a free man at the age of 90.

PUZZLE PICTURE NO 1



This unhappy pile of stones is to be found not far from the entrance of the Royal Bethlem Hospital. Where are they from, and why have they been abandoned?

[In this case, the editors do not have the answer.]

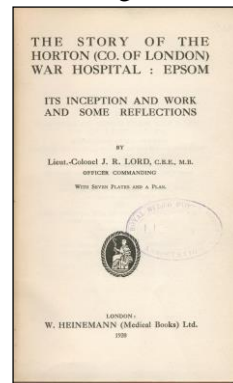
College Display of Antiquarian Books on World War I.

Francis Maunze

The following two books from the College's antiquarian book collection are currently on display on the first floor at 21 Prescott Street.

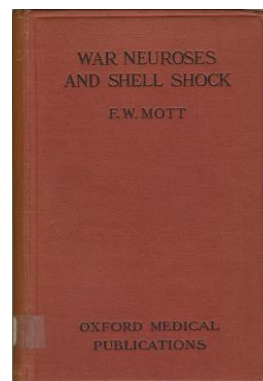
The Story of the Horton (Co. of London) War Hospital: Epsom. Lt. Col. JR Lord. (1920)

According to the author the objectives of this book



were threefold: firstly, as an appreciation of the services rendered for sick and wounded soldiers; secondly, as a memorial of interest to many of the former patients and thirdly, as a record of the administrative, medical, and surgical work.

Part One describes the Horton Asylum and the genesis of the War Hospital, looking at the reception of military patients and the development of the Hospital from 1915 to 1919. Part Two describes



special sections of the Hospital's work, for instance the work of the surgical, medical, psychiatric and eye departments.

War Neuroses and Shell Shock. FR Mott (1919)

This book is about the investigation and treatment of cases of 'War Neuroses and Shell Shock', first at the Neurological Section of the 4th London General Hospital and later at the Maudsley Neurological Clearing Hospital.

Dr Christopher Addison, M.P., the Minister of Construction in 1919, writes in the introduction that the book brings together conclusions resulting from extensive clinical observations and from original anatomical research relating to the effects of shell shock and gas poisoning on the central nervous system. Col. Mott shows that the majority of cases of so called 'shell shock' were truly 'emotional shock'.