
Obituaries



John Norman Parker Moore, formerly Medical Director, St Patrick's Hospital and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Trinity College, Dublin

Professor Moore was born in Beragh in Co. Tyrone in 1911. His father was a Methodist Minister and one of the rules of that Church was that ministers move every three years, so during his early years Norman moved from Beragh to Tipperary and then to Carlow, Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow. In an interview he gave to Dr David Healy in 1991 he described himself growing up "in a very happy home with very good parents indeed – a trusting father and a concerned and interested mother". The adjectives chosen – trusting, concerned, interested – might well have been genes on the family tree for Norman Moore was to exhibit just that constellation of virtues throughout his own life, a life of dedicated public and professional service and private, sustained marital and family love.

He was the only son among four children – and his relationship with his three sisters, Fran, Dorothy and Mildred was a close one. He was a boarder at Methodists' College in Belfast and it was at school that he first contracted tuberculosis. He was later to suggest that having had TB was a good experience in his preparation for becoming a doctor, helping him develop sympathy for the ill. He sat the Trinity entrance from home where he then had a distinguished undergraduate medical career before having a TB relapse while a houseman. So he went to work in a sanatorium in North Wales for a couple of years but his TB continued to plague him and he returned to Ireland and had the best part of a year off. He then applied for the post of Medical Officer at St Patrick's Hospital in 1939.

At that time the Medical Director was Dr Richard Leeper who had been in that post since 1899, was a former President of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association and by this time was quite old and, not surprisingly, somewhat set in his ways. The post for which Norman Moore applied, Medical Officer, was supposedly promised to somebody else. However, at the end of the interview Leeper asked Norman Moore a seemingly innocuous question: what was his hobby? "Fishing" replied Norman. "The job's yours" declared a delighted Leeper, no mean fisherman himself. And thus one of the loves of Norman Moore's life, fishing, directly contributed to his encountering what was to prove another of his great loves, St Patrick's Hospital.

In one of his letters to Freud written in 1909, Carl Jung referred to a psychiatrist of the English breed as someone who "knows how to catch pike and salmon, sails and rows very well but has only a few barbaric notions of the psyche". Norman Moore was not to prove such a psychiatrist. True he continued to fish, but only as an occasional respite from his central preoccupation – the modernisation of Swift's great bequest. Within a couple of years he was off to the Crichton Royal in Dumfries for further training. The real attraction there was Professor Willi Mayer-Gross, a dynamic, charismatic and gifted teacher – one of that constellation of great Jewish refugees that so enriched British medicine during the late 1930s and 1940s. Moore was greatly influenced by Mayer-Gross who was a brilliant administrator, a superb teacher and a generous and kind man who regarded his junior staff as people for whom he had a special responsibility. Norman Moore spent some six years at the Crichton and was made Deputy Medical Director, but he was then invited to return to St Patrick's as Medical Director which he did in 1946.

This was to be where he remained until his retirement in 1979 – a period only exceeded in length by the man who had first appointed him as a junior doctor 40 years before, Richard Leeper. For all Leeper's fine work (he had ensured that the hospital was exceptionally well run and survived through the relatively lean years of the first half of this century), St Patrick's was somewhat stuck in a time-warp of Victorian rigidity. The wards were rigidly segregated. They were for the most part locked. The atmosphere was disciplined but institutional. Norman Moore was aided by Bob McCullough, an energetic and efficient secretary, and he recruited a number of key figures, including Anne Kelly, a formidable

and effective Matron and Joe Meehan, a loyal and dedicated deputy, and together they set about a revolution in psychiatric care. He was, from the outset, a therapeutic enthusiast. He took to using the newly developed major tranquillisers and antidepressants with relish. He exuded optimism: for him psychiatric illness was, for the most part, eminently treatable. What was needed was appropriate knowledge, a healing atmosphere, an optimistic therapist, and time. He fostered training, developed out-patient care, built up the staff. He could be stern, even intimidating – yet the only thing he could not forgive was indifference. The hospital under his influence, supported by a wise Board of Governors, gave him his head and he repaid their confidence by making St Patrick's a byword for dedication, understanding and trust. Patient turnover soared, length of stay fell and the hospital embarked on a major programme of redevelopment which continued throughout his time in office.

He was always open to new ideas. He pioneered the idea of the patient lecture – patients being informed about the nature of psychiatric illness, the treatments available, the ways to stay well. He was a vigorous supporter of voluntary organisations, his role in the arrival of Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland being a case in point. In 1946, Moore was approached by a cheerful burly American, named Conor, who told him that he wanted to sow the seeds of AA in Ireland. Moore listened. He introduced Conor to a recently admitted patient with a long history of alcoholism and personal disaster and more or less challenged him to show what he could do. The patient was Richard Percival and that week, along with Conor, Percival formed the first Alcoholics Anonymous group in these islands and, I believe, in Europe. The approach worked and Moore became AA's most enthusiastic supporter. In 1960 Richard Percival was appointed social worker at St Patrick's with specific responsibility for alcoholic patients and later he became the first director of the National Council on Alcoholism. Norman Moore went on to recruit John Cooney and together they built up one of the largest alcohol dependence treatment units in Europe.

It is no exaggeration to say that Norman Moore loved St Patrick's. Throughout his life he saw it and its role in solemn almost religious terms. It was a treasure of the nation, bequeathed to us by the beneficence and foresight of Swift to provide succour, support, relief and care for generations of psychiatrically ill. Moore saw himself and all who worked with him as the guardians of this inheritance. Everything that was important in his life was linked with the hospital. His beloved wife, Jane, he met there and married in 1951. They lived in Delville, a house on the banks of the Liffey which he had helped design and which is called after the house in Glasnevin of Patrick Delaney,

one of Swift's closest friends. There they brought up their five sons – Dermot, Niall, Alan, David and Christopher. It was at Delville that Norman Moore cultivated another great love, in addition to fishing and psychiatry, namely farming or perhaps more particularly forestry. After his retirement and move to his own lovely house and land at Bleach Green he was able to indulge his love and fascination for trees to the full.

Norman Moore was an exceedingly private man who avoided public settings. But he would when it was required enter the public arena. Indeed, I first met him on a television programme devoted to the subject of medical education on the fledgling RTE. I was a medical student at UCD. He was the major academic psychiatrist at TCD. After the programme he offered me a post at the hospital following my qualification. He was a major influence on the careers of many prominent Irish psychiatrists including Professor Tom Lynch, Dr Thomas Bewley, Dr Desmond McGrath, Dr Pat McKeon, Dr Frank O'Donoghue and Professor Marcus Webb, all of whom trained under him at St Patrick's.

He was a member of the 1966 Commission on Mental Health which paved the way for the changes in psychiatric planning which occurred over the next three decades. He was the voice of psychiatry in the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland and a distinguished Fellow, the psychiatrist most trusted by physicians and surgeons. He was a Foundation Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, served with distinction on the consultant manpower committee, Comhairle na nOspideal, and for many years on the Irish Medical Council. He was the respectable and the respected face of Irish psychiatry. He nurtured the close ties between psychiatry and medicine by providing for many years psychiatric clinics at the Adelaide and the Meath. He battled with and convinced the newly formed Voluntary Health Insurance Board of the right of psychiatric patients to have the same cover as their physically ill counterparts, a right which his successors still fight to protect against the depredations of foreign insurers and the European trade directorate. Always committed to the closest links between independent and state psychiatry, and keen to develop a research tradition akin to that he had seen at the Crichton, he attracted back from the United States the late Peter Beckett to be the first professor of psychiatry at Trinity College. Together they developed with the Eastern Health Board the pioneering acute psychiatric unit at St James's Hospital linked with Trinity College and serving the population of a sector of Dublin. Professor Beckett's early death was a terrible blow to Norman Moore but the seed they sowed proved sturdy and today the links between St Patrick's, the Eastern Health Board and Trinity

College, and the academic unit at St James's Hospital remain.

One of the most difficult tasks I had to undertake on my return from Britain, indeed the most difficult, was to suggest to Norman Moore that it was time for him to retire. He had reached 80 years of age but was still working at St Edmundsbury Hospital, the small sister hospital of St Patrick's. He hated going and I hated asking him. He loved seeing patients and they, for the most part, loved seeing him. I often asked him whether he ever got exasperated, depressed, or worried he would get burn-out. He would give me one of those piercing withering looks which suggested I pull myself together and get on with the job.

His last visit to St Patrick's Cathedral was on 8 January 1995 when in the company of Her Excellency, the President of Ireland, we celebrated the 250th anniversary of the Foundation of St Patrick's Hospital. It was mandatory that the man who had given so much of his life to the hospital for 50 of its years should be there and though I know it took an enormous act of physical effort and mental resilience he was there and we were immensely grateful. His last few years mirrored those of his great hero and inspiration, Jonathan Swift. He withdrew into himself as illness supervened, though unlike Swift he was not alone but surrounded by his loving family. I know he would modestly have disclaimed any comparison between himself and the fiery, passionate man of letters whose inspired legacy created the hospital where he, Moore, served. But Moore was truly Swiftian in his steadfast devotion to honesty and truth, his insistence on the very highest of moral and professional standards, his love of those closest to him, his suspicion of

ideologies and isms, of Orwell's "smelly orthodoxies".

"I have ever hated all nations, professions and communities, and all my love is towards individuals", Swift wrote of himself. "I hate and detest that animal called man; although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas and so forth. This is the system upon which I have governed myself many years". Allowing for Swift's characteristic overstatement, that was the system upon which Norman Moore governed himself too. "Swift haunts me" said Yeats, "he is always just around the next corner". In St Patrick's Norman Moore seems just around the corner, and indeed at his old house Delville where I now reside, on the banks of his beloved Liffey and in the grounds of St Edmundsbury. I, in common with others who were so crucially influenced by him, still anticipate that he will materialise, grip me gently but firmly by the elbow and calmly suggest that a little more patience or a change in therapy will transform an incorrigible problem into a therapeutic triumph. He was one of the great figures of Irish medicine in this century and his legacy in the shape of the hospital he so magnificently served and the generations of young men and women he so cardinaly influenced is incomparable. His has been the fullest of lives, a fact I do most fervently desire will be of great comfort to his gracious wife Jane, to his sons and their partners, Dermot and Clare, Niall and Catherine, Alan and Lucy, David and Lucinda, Christopher and Michael, his grandchildren and all his former colleagues and friends and patients who cherish their memories of him and mourn his passing.

ANTHONY W. CLARE