

Obituary

KENNETH DEWHURST (1919–84)

Dr Kenneth E. Dewhurst, TD, DPhil, MD, FRCPsych, the psychiatrist and distinguished historian of medicine, died suddenly on 10 December 1984. He was a Lancastrian by birth and served in the Army throughout the second world war, surviving the evacuation from Europe in 1940 and Far East campaigns. Thereafter, he studied medicine in Dublin and after qualifying in 1952 he eventually selected psychiatry as his speciality. He lived in or near Oxford throughout his medical career.

Dewhurst's researches into many aspects of psychiatry, both clinical and experimental, have received fitting praise, but he is better known for his many publications on medical history. The first was a biography of Thomas Dover (1660–1742) in 1957, and there followed a sequence of important books and articles. After intensive research, he was able to decipher the personal code used by John Locke (1632–1704), and from a perusal of his papers wrote *John Locke* (1963), which dealt for the first time in detail with the philosopher's medical activities. Dewhurst next turned his attention to another celebrated seventeenth-century Oxford medical man, Thomas Willis (1621–75), and his interest in Willis remained for the rest of his life. Meantime, he was gradually extending his intimate acquaintance with seventeenth-century English medicine, and an outstanding exponent of it, Thomas Sydenham (1624–89), was his next subject. Again, his research included a comprehensive study of manuscript sources, and the result of his labours was *Dr Thomas Sydenham* (1966) and several articles on related topics.

In order to ensure guaranteed and speedy publication of his historical investigations, Dewhurst, characteristically, became his own publisher, with the imprint of Sandford Publications. His venture was an edited collection of essays on the evolution of the Oxford clinical school (1970), and it was followed by books on brain function (1972), the medical work of Johannes Schiller (1978, with Professor Nigel Reeves), the psychiatry of John Hughlings Jackson (1982), the clinical achievements of Willis, based on his decipherment of the latter's remarkable notebook in the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine and on notes of Willis's lectures recorded by two of his pupils, Locke and Lower. Finally, in 1983, there appeared a notable edited facsimile and translation of the *Vindicatio* published in 1665 by Richard Lower (1631–91), also of Oxford, as a defence of the experimental method. At the time of his death, Dewhurst was preparing a study of medical men who were also spies, but, regrettably, his proposed definitive biography of Willis had not been completed.

Although strictly-speaking a part-time historian of medicine with no historical training *per se*, Kenneth Dewhurst's contributions to the subject made him eligible for inclusion among the professionals. In particular, his rich knowledge of seventeenth-century English medicine and its complex background was the equal of any academic. His historical sense and insight, his extensive scholarship in several areas of medical history, his elegant style, and his industry allowed him to achieve an excellence that has made his writings invaluable sources for future historians. Moreover, Dewhurst belonged to an endangered human type, the Oxford eccentric, and we admired him for it.

Edwin Clarke