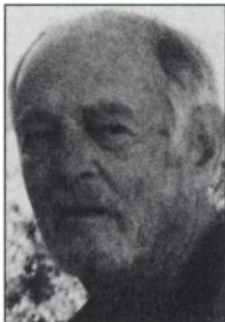


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# Obituaries

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**Theodore (Theo) Schlicht**  
*formerly Physician Superintendent, West Park Hospital, Epsom, Surrey.*

I would like my father to be remembered by more than just a formal recitation of his achievements and his movements. But how am I to negotiate between that which is public and that which is private and personal? Your conventional

obituarist has no such problem. The public and the private interconnect, however, and the one has little meaning without the other. I shall attempt to 'ride' the boundary, and leave you to make the connection.

He was born in Beaufort, a small country town in the Western District of Victoria, Australia, and his lifelong love of plants began there. His family life in that town was unhappy, bizarre, and more reminiscent of William Faulkner than of *Neighbours*. The local general practitioner and his wife introduced him to music and books, and, I fancy, to the idea of becoming a doctor. He loved his visits to their house, but could only do so secretly, as his mother's jealousy had forbidden them. I never met his mother, who had been a deeply unhappy woman after the death of two children in a matter of days. She died of breast cancer. His father I knew well. He was a country auctioneer, a respected and popular man locally, and, apparently, something of a philanderer, which may account for some of my father's unhappy childhood. He died in his sleep, after a full day auctioning sheep. Dad always said that is how he would like to go: and he did.

Dad was educated at a Jesuit boarding school. This experience helped him decide never to give my brother and me any formal religious education. Nevertheless, he went very much out of his way, two years ago, in southern India, to locate the tomb of St Francis Xavier, after whom his school was named. He was runner-up in a public competition for a Rhode's Scholarship to England, and it was always said that this was denied him because he was a Catholic. He studied medicine at Melbourne University, qualifying at the age of 21.

He dreamed of coming to Europe in order to fulfil his longing to see the great cathedrals and

works of art, about which he had only read, and also because he saw Europe as a place of great freedom and tolerance, compared with the rather provincial place Australia was then, but is no longer. He married soon after qualifying, and went with my mother to live on the Gilbert and Ellice islands, where he was medical officer for the phosphate mining company.

In 1939 they set out for England, but the war intervened, and they were obliged to return to Australia, where my father was drafted into general practice. Soon afterwards, he joined the Royal Australian Air Force. This was the beginning of his psychiatric career. He was part of the occupying forces in Japan, and he confused, and even shamed, his two children, with his great love of Japan and its people. This love may have sprung from his humanity, as much as from his empathic feeling for an outcast people, as the Japanese then were, especially in Australia. This humanity, whatever its origins, was evident throughout his life. He took the side of the underdog.

Soon, after two years in Japan, he returned briefly to Australia for a few months before setting out, once again, for England. My mother, brother and I joined him three years later. When we arrived in England, it was, for me, to meet a stranger whom I did not know. Dad was studying for his MRCP, and no interruption was allowed. On Sundays we would all go and visit a cathedral, or a stately home. He was concerned to give us the advantage of the culture he found lacking in his own childhood. There were always people in the house; mostly Australian painters and artists, one or two of whom my parents supported for many years. Dad had a great interest in the arts, but he was also fascinated and excited by the dangerous and eccentric lives many of these people led. He never showed any interest in taking up painting himself, and his hopes for me and my brother were entirely conventional.

In the late fifties dad became physician superintendent of West Park Hospital, Epsom where he succeeded in bringing about great changes in the face of considerable opposition. West Park eventually became a much respected psychiatric hospital, and dad was responsible for finding space there for the research laboratories of the late Derek Richter.

Dad spent the last years of his professional life at St George's Hospital, Tooting. He was very happy there with consultant responsibility for

an area of south London. He was actively involved with the sexual dysfunction clinic, and began, tentatively, to take a more psychotherapeutic approach to his work. He pursued his interest in transsexuals, and transvestites, and talked to a number of respectable and not so respectable groups on these topics. He was undoubtedly an able physician and diagnostic psychiatrist, but his most memorable contribution arose from his humanity, and very real concern for people who found themselves on the margins of society.

He was born in Australia, lived in London, died in Mallorca, and at the end of his life, held an Irish passport. His ashes were scattered in his gardens in Mallorca and London. At his request, his name will be added to the family grave in Beaufort, Australia.

JUSTIN SCHLICHT



**Derek Richter**, formerly Director MRC Neuropsychiatric Unit, Carshalton, Surrey, and Secretary General of the International Brain Research Organisation (IBRO)

Derek Richter, one of the founding fathers of modern neurochemistry died on 15 December, 1995, at the age of 88. He had a full and active life, the most

important aspect of which for him was to strive, through research, to reach a better understanding of the working of the brain and to gain new knowledge that might help in the treatment of the mentally ill.

Derek's father was an artist designer of fine furniture, imprinting on him a keen life-long interest and appreciation of art. He was educated at Oundle School, where science teaching was known to be good, and won an open scholarship to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he read chemistry and was awarded a first class honours degree. He received a grant from his College and went to Munich, which was then one of the outstanding centres of research in organic chemistry. He worked in the laboratory of Wieland, one of the pioneers in the study of biological oxidations and was awarded his PhD (*magna cum laude*). After moving back to England he was invited to work in the laboratory of Sir

Frederick Gowland Hopkins in Cambridge on investigations into the fate of adrenaline in the body. He was later invited by Professor F. L. Golla to the Maudsley Hospital in London, where he continued working on adrenaline. Research here was interrupted by the war and the work was transferred to Mill Hill School. It was during this period that Derek decided, at the age of 35, to get a medical training. After qualifying, he worked in general practice in London and as a house physician in Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge. Nevertheless, he wanted to get back to research and in 1947 accepted the position of Director of Research in Whitchurch Hospital, Cardiff. The research reputation of Whitchurch was excellent, due to the outstanding work previously carried out by Juda Quastel. Unhappily, these research activities had come to an end at the outbreak of war and Derek had to build up everything from scratch in an environment that often interfered rather than promoted his efforts. I remember that, even in 1957, when I came to work there, one had to get to the main laboratory through the pharmacy, negotiating a narrow passage under the scornful gaze of the hospital pharmacist, who made it clear that she suspected us of the worst. In spite of bad accommodation, obsolete equipment and an unsympathetic medical superintendent, Richter developed exciting new research. He succeeded in obtaining financial support from the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Rockefeller Foundation and recruited an excellent crew, with whom he embarked on some pioneering neurochemical work. In 1957 the laboratory was formally taken over by the MRC and the decision made to move the Neuropsychiatry Research Unit to a new location, where clinical collaboration was possible. In 1960 the Unit moved to Carshalton, Surrey, and a Clinical Investigation Ward was established in a nearby mental hospital. In addition to the relatively small number of permanent staff, the Unit attracted a great number of visiting scientists and became a neuroscience centre of international repute. He retired from the MRC in 1971 but remained active in the field of neuroscience, in particular as the Secretary General of the International Brain Research Organisation (IBRO). Furthermore, during this period he edited six books and wrote a delightful autobiography, which was published when he was 82-years-old.

Derek's *oeuvre* contributed significantly to the development of neurochemistry as we know it. His pioneering contributions included the discovery, in collaboration with Hermann Blaschko, of monoamine oxidase (MAO), these studies initiating exciting worldwide research into the fate of monoamines in nervous tissues. Another lasting contribution of great impact was the demonstration with Rex Dawson and Jim Crossland that the brain is a metabolically active organ