

The College

The New President

Thomas Bewley will take up office as the new President of the College at the Annual Meeting in July. He has been closely connected with the College for many years, and was Sub-Dean from 1972–77 and Dean from 1977–82. He has also been Secretary and Chairman of the Manpower and Education Committees. His particular interests lie in the field of drug dependence and he has published on this subject, as well as on medical manpower and the side-effects of drugs. He was a co-founder of the Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence, and a member of both the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs and its precursor the Standing Advisory Committee on Drug Dependence. He was a consultant adviser to the DHSS for nine years, and has been a Consultant Psychiatrist since 1961 at Tooting Bec and St Thomas Hospitals.

A colleague writes: Dr Bewley comes from an Irish Quaker medical family. His father and grandfather were physicians. His mother was a medical student and his sister is a psychiatrist. His wife is also a doctor and a member of the GMC. Seven of his eleven cousins are doctors, one recently being Dean of Queen's University Medical School, Belfast. His grandfather was Professor of *Materia Medica* at Trinity College, Dublin, and his father was Professor of Medical Jurisprudence and Hygiene at the Royal College of Surgeons Medical School. As well as their teaching commitments, both practised as general physicians when specialization was less common than it is today. Both were in charge of a Quaker mental hospital (Bloomfield) in Dublin and treated psychiatric patients there for 81 years, 51 and 30 years respectively. Dr Bewley has himself treated a patient previously treated (during the First World War) by his

grandfather and later by this father.

Dr Bewley was playing tennis in the Bloomfield Asylum gardens before World War II, so there was always a likelihood that he might become a doctor, possibly a psychiatrist, if only because of familiarity, heredity, environment or lack of alternative ideas. He decided on medicine in his penultimate year at school; the alternative had been journalism. Diseases of the mind interested him, seeming more complex than other branches of medicine. In his last year at school he read the works of Sigmund Freud from cover to cover (in translation), and still thinks of Freud as a great literary figure, educator and prophet, as well as a psychiatrist. While at medical school he played competitive chess and founded a film society, making two films. The first was called 'Asylum' and was a dream inside a dream inside another dream (which suggests an early interest in dynamic psychotherapy). The second was a puppet film about a clock which was enamoured by, and endeavoured to ravish, a statue, who loved a lamp post (an obvious forensic topic).

He qualified in 1950 at Trinity College, Dublin, and trained as a psychiatrist at St Patrick's Hospital, Dublin, the Maudsley Hospital and the University of Cincinnati. He had been awarded the Henry Hutchinson Stewart Travelling Scholarship and came to England for further postgraduate training. He has remained an Irishman who is ambivalent as to whether he is an overseas doctor or not. Like many of his compatriots, he has ended up outside Ireland. If he was not where he is today, he would probably be in Dublin, perhaps as Treasurer of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, as this office was held by his grandfather (1903–44) and his father (1944–74).

Natalie*

It was a memorable occasion, so memorable in every way that one could be forgiven for believing that Natalie herself had had a hand in its organization.

The church, St Paul's, Knightsbridge, conveniently located a little more than a stone's throw from the College, was well filled. It was very much a family gathering: there were representatives of Natalie's family, some personal

friends, and then ourselves, her extended family. There were present two of the three past presidents of the College, Linford Rees and Desmond Pond (Lady Roth represented Martin Roth who was abroad), and a past president of the RMPA, William Sargant. Officers of the College and members of Council, past and present, came from every corner of Britain and Eire, together with representatives of the Divisions. Equally well represented were members of the staff of the College who worked, or had worked in the past, in some capacity with Natalie.

The music, so often little more than a tedious background to a Service of this sort, played an important and integral

*A Service of Thanksgiving for the Life of Natalie Cobbing (1926–1984) was held at St Paul's, Knightsbridge on 29 March 1984.

role and was a joy to listen to. The organ set the scene with an arrangement of Nimrod, the most soul-searching of Elgar's Enigma Variations, and closed the proceedings with J. S. Bach's Fugue in F major: and there was such sweet singing in the small, but highly professional choir.

The clergy made their contributions with dignity and without sentimentality. Simon Rowell, Natalie's god-son, read the Lesson (Revelation 21 vv 1–4).

The President, Ken Rawnsley, looking anguished, gave the address. He spoke eloquently, but with deep feeling of Natalie's personal attributes and of her twenty-five years' dedicated service, first to the RMPA and then to the College.

He spoke too of the anger he felt that her life had been cut off so abruptly when she still had so much to give and so much to enjoy.

The buffet luncheon at the College following the Service was consonant with the Service itself—highly professional, well-mannered and well ordered. Above all, it was a family affair: an opportunity to renew old friendships in a setting of communal grief.

It is to be hoped that Natalie, wherever she may be located on the Parnassian slopes, will appreciate, that in our attempt to show our affection and gratitude, we did our best.

HRR

Obituary

ANGUS MACNIVEN, retired, formerly Physician Superintendent, Gartnavel Royal Hospital, Glasgow, Scotland

Dr MacNiven died early this year in his native Isle of Mull at the age of 83.

He was a man of many achievements, of self-effacing modesty and unforgettable individuality. He graduated at Glasgow University in 1923. He had been Deputy Physician Superintendent of the Royal Edinburgh Hospital and had gained experience with Adolph Meyer in Baltimore before being appointed Physician Superintendent of Gartnavel Royal Hospital, Consultant Psychiatrist to the Western Infirmary and Lecturer in Psychiatry at the University of Glasgow in 1932. These posts he graced for 33 years.

He was Secretary and later Chairman of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association in Scotland before becoming President of the whole Association from 1959–60. He was a Foundation and Honorary Fellow of the College.

Clinically his alert perspicacity and sage like wisdom were matched only by his ever present kindness. As a teacher his shrewd and firm, but quietly persistent question, 'Tell me how it works and helps the patient because I don't really understand', inevitably led the most seemingly self-assured apprentice into unexpectedly deep and uncharted water. The experience was as educative as it was memorable.

His integrity was beyond question. He was an eminent and respected witness in many notable murder trials. This respect was in no way diminished because he had the courage and honesty to say, when apt, 'I don't know'. Among his writings, a chapter on 'Psychoses and criminal responsibility' remains a thought-provoking and erudite contribution to a Cambridge University publication of the 1940s. Many of those whom he had guided along the difficult quest of attaining competence and insight in the art and science of psychiatry travelled from afar to honour him at his retiral dinner. He was loyal to his Hebridean origins, but

in no way insular. He preferred to say he had retired to an island in North Britain.

MMW

In 1946 a number of ex-Service doctors, having had to do with stress-laden men, and seeking to further their psychiatric training and experience, were accepted on the medical staff at Gartnavel, and sat at the feet of Dr MacNiven.

Angus—and in the minds and hearts of all who knew him he was never other than 'Angus'—welcomed us in his delightful, sometimes slightly surprised or bemused way ('Is that so, now, Doctor?'), and never made us feel what we were: children in a world of which he was patriarch. He was a brilliant clinician, a superb teacher by example, and a gentle but positive leader: 'Is no one *talking* to this lady?', never 'Let us have a blood rhubarb tomorrow'. On occasion, to the consternation of the duty doctor, he would travel far afield to see a patient, and telephone back at two in the morning, from Oban, to say he was bringing in a poor depressed lady, and would we have a bed ready—somewhere, even in the doctors' common room.

When we left his care (and I use the word advisedly) he did not lose interest in us, but, *experto crede*, continued to be aware of our doings, and was ready, unprompted, to give refreshing comfort and support when we met problems in the discharge of the practice of psychiatry as he had taught it to us.

When he retired it was a great joy for many of us, from all over the country, to come together to 'dine him out', present him with a sealskin waistcoat, and listen to one of his inimitable speeches.

Many, many patients whom he never knew, have reason to be grateful to the humane, patient-orientated professional philosophy which Angus instilled into his disciples. Perhaps his influence will never die.

PMcG