

## Obituary

Editor: Henry R. Rollin

### **ROBERT GOW MCINNES, formerly Physician Superintendent, Warneford Hospital, Oxford**

Robin—as he was known—McInnes was one of the last of the forward-looking Medical Superintendents. His far-sightedness made the Warneford and Park Hospitals, Oxford, nationally sought after.

Robert Gow McInnes was born in Alloa on 31 August 1903. Qualifying at Edinburgh, he practised in general medicine before moving to psychiatry. He became Deputy Medical Superintendent at Morningside Hospital and was much influenced by Professor Sir David Henderson.

In 1938, McInnes was appointed to succeed Alexander Neill as Physician Superintendent of the Warneford Hospital, the original Oxford Asylum built in the 1820s. McInnes adapted a convalescent home, bought by Neill, as the 'undesignated' Park Hospital for Functional Nervous Disorders.

Into the Warneford Hospital he introduced psychiatric social work in 1949 and, in 1950, psychology in the person of May Davidson.

During the planning of the National Health Service, McInnes was one of the heads of registered private hospitals who tackled Aneurin Bevan personally in the hope of remaining independent, with NHS help: totally in or out, was Bevan's uncompromising reply. After heart-searching, McInnes and his Hospital Management Committee decided in favour of entering the Service in 1948, to avoid the exclusion of "the very patients which the hospital had been founded to assist, namely the middle and professional classes".

McInnes proceeded to extend the medical staff to form training grades. His close friend, Ian Skottowe, was persuaded as second consultant in 1951. Since McInnes's idea was to make the Warneford and Park a psychiatric clinic specialising in teaching and research, he enlisted, also in 1951, Dr R. W. Parnell to research into the constitutional aspect of psychiatry.

During the 1950s, the Warneford had care of the majority of mentally ill undergraduates and postgraduates of the University. The special facilities for work and examinations engendered the nickname 'Warneford College', reputed to get more Firsts than any other Oxford College.

McInnes was one of the innovators of the open mixed ward as early as 1951. In that year he took control of child psychiatry which, in 1958 with Christopher Ounsted as consultant, he expanded into the Park Hospital for Children. The Park's adult patients were transferred to the front wards of the Warneford, which became 'de-designated' from the Board of Control.

An assiduous and dogged administrator, McInnes was for many years the psychiatric 'guru' of the Oxford Regional Hospital Board.

In the 1960s he introduced general unlocking of wards and expanding day care. When the Regius Professor of Medicine obtained the endowment of a Chair of Psychiatry from the W. A. Handley Trust Funds in 1967, McInnes retired.

His retirement was a sad one because of a developing cardiac and Parkinsonian trouble. His wife, Dorothy, whom he married in 1935, nursed Robin devotedly at Wootton throughout his long illness, under which he lost neither his pawky sense of humour nor his interests. He died peacefully on 24 October 1987 with his family around him.

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### **VERA ANN WILKINSON, Consultant Child Psychiatrist, Slough Family and Child Guidance Clinic and Wexham Park Hospital, Slough, Berkshire.**

Dr Vera Wilkinson died after a short illness on 28 February 1987, at the age of 64. Vera was born in Sawley, near Ripon, Yorkshire, on 25 May 1922 and was educated at Ripon High School for Girls, where she was head of school and captain of games. A Parkinson scholarship took her to Leeds University to study medicine, where she graduated MB, ChB in 1947. She became MRCPsych in 1972 and was elected to the Fellowship in 1984. She worked in obstetrics and gynaecology, pathology, medicine and paediatrics during the following three years, and after a period at the London Chest hospital specialised in thoracic medicine in Brentford and later at Birmingham.

She married in 1953 Rupert Wilkinson, a specialist in radiology, and during the following ten years she had four children. She managed to continue part-time work in the school medical service during the early childhood of her young family.

In 1962 she took up psychiatry and her training was initially at the Fairmile Hospital and the Tavistock Clinic. During 1964–65 she was a clinical assistant at the Maudsley Hospital and the Brixton Child Guidance Clinic, and in 1967 was appointed registrar at the Ealing Child Guidance Clinic. From 1967–1969 she was senior registrar to the Earl's Court Child Guidance Clinic, and was appointed consultant to the Slough Child Guidance Clinic and Wexham Park Hospital in 1969.