

membership in general; these reports are likely to influence the views of Council and thence determine the views given by the College to Health Authorities and employing authorities within the NHS.

It would seem to us extremely important that issues raised in the President's paper are discussed as widely and openly as possible before the College Council submits its official views on them. Perhaps consultation on the President's paper should be extended by circulating it to all members and inceptors directly, with some sort of balloting on specific matters. Additionally, the Divisions of Psychiatry within the cogwheel structure of the NHS should be invited to discuss the issues raised by the President and make recommendations on them to employing authorities.

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An historical section for the College?

DEAR SIRS

Dr B. H. Anstee's letter (*Bulletin*, May 1983, 7, 93) raises the important matter of maintaining archives, central and peripheral.

The late Dr Alexander Walk had an encyclopaedic knowledge and assisted local historians of psychiatry. His death has created a void, and there should be developed an active historical section in the College which can advise on local archives and preserve archives of its own.

Photographs and records should be carefully preserved. Attention should still be paid to the predecessors of the Mental Illness Hospital, the Private Asylum. An example is Bensham Hospital in Gateshead. This closed in about 1868. Some of its buildings are still extant and one is used as a shirt factory. It is likely that all traces of this establishment will be gone by the turn of the century. There was a physician there, Dr George Robinson, who published a book in 1858 called *The Prevention and Treatment of Nervous Disorders*, a veritable testament of Victorian Psychiatry. Also associated with this institution in its latter years was James Crichton Brown. He published three volumes of anecdotes under the

title of *Doctor's Thoughts*, which provides a vivid description of the late 19th and early 20th century professional life—much of it of interest to psychiatrists. Bensham Hospital is just one example of an institution which has historical associations above the level of curiosity. There must be many similar throughout the country that deserve recording.

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A College group for liaison psychiatry

DEAR SIRS

A year ago we proposed (*Bulletin*, August 1982, 6, 143) the formation of a new College Group for members interested in consultation and liaison in the medical and surgical units of general hospitals. There was an encouraging response to our letter and we held a successful preliminary meeting at the quarterly meeting of the College in Oxford. It was agreed that a working party should make plans for a one-day conference in London. We hope this will provide an opportunity for scientific papers and also discussion of the organization and aims of a new group.

There was considerable support in Oxford for a not-too-formal group for both general and child psychiatrists with a special clinical or academic interest in liaison psychiatry. Speakers stressed the need to work closely with other medical specialties and to avoid fragmentation within the profession. A number of major issues in clinical practice, teaching and research were suggested as subjects for discussion by the group.

Further details will be circulated as soon as possible. It will be helpful if any prospective member who has not so far indicated his interest, could write to the Convener of the working party, Dr Richard Mayou, at the address below.

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Quality of Life in Extended Care Wards

A one-day conference, arranged by the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the British Geriatric Society, the Health Advisory Service and the Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom, was held in March 1982. The proceedings have now been published, and a limited number of copies of

The Quality of Life in Extended Care Wards are available, free of charge, from the Administrative Secretary of the Section for the Psychiatry of Old Age at the College address (please include a 50p stamp to cover postage).