

## Obituaries

Editor: Henry R. Rollin

**WALTER FABISCH, Formerly Consultant Psychiatrist, Mapperley Hospital, Nottingham**

Walter Fabisch was born on 7 June 1904 in Breslau, then in Germany, now Wroclaw, Poland. After a distinguished school career, he qualified in medicine in Berlin in 1929. He initially worked as a medical biochemist, but lost his job as a result of the Nazi purges of German Jews in the early 1930s. Together with his wife, Lise, Fabisch emigrated to Italy, where, in 1934, he re-qualified MD (in Italian) in Palermo. After working in paediatrics in Italy, Fabisch was interned as an alien and transferred to an internment camp in India. However, his talents were quickly discovered and exploited by the Camp Commandant and it was not long before he was treating not just other inmates of the camp, but also the local Maharajah. His reward for this was a commission in the Royal Army Medical Corps, being demobbed in 1947 with the rank of Major.

In 1948, Fabisch came to England to study for the DTM & H at the London School of Hygiene. It was suggested to him by his tutor there that he should also take the MRCP, which he succeeded in doing. Following this, he contacted Dr Harry Fisher, a friend from his Berlin days, then Senior Assistant Medical Officer at Mapperley Hospital, in Nottingham, who encouraged him to take up a career in psychiatry. Fabisch achieved the DPM in 1950, was elected to the fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians in 1969, and was elected a foundation fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in 1971.

Fabisch started work at Mapperley Hospital in January 1949 and served as a consultant from 1954 until his retirement in 1972. During his time at Mapperley he developed the EEG Department in Nottingham to such effect that when he retired a full-time consultant neurophysiologist was appointed. He also pioneered a liaison clinic with the dermatologists in Nottingham which he continued to run for nearly ten years after retirement from his full-time post. Fabisch also had an interest in forensic psychiatry and served as Visiting Psychotherapist to HM Prison, Nottingham, for over 30 years.

Sadly, the last few years of his life were marred by progressive Alzheimer's disease, during which time he was cared for by Professor Tom Arie and his colleagues in the Department of Health Care for the Elderly in Nottingham. He died on 11 December

1991, his wife, Lise, having predeceased him by 18 months. The couple had no children.

He will be remembered as an intellectually able, compassionate and kind colleague, who had many cultural interests outside medicine.

MICHAEL HARRIS

**DR FRANCIS EDWARD PILKINGTON, formerly Physician Superintendent, Moorhaven Hospital, Devon**



Francis Edward Pilkington, one of the most distinguished psychiatrists of his day, died on 15 December 1991, at the age of 86. In 1968 he served as President of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, the forerunner of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, of which he was elected a foundation fellow in 1971 and elevated to honorary fellowship in 1972.

Further recognition of his contribution to psychiatry at an international level came with his appointment as an honorary member of the Société Royale de Médecine Mentale de Belgique.

Pilkington was born on 16 July 1905, at Repton, Derbyshire, of Irish ancestry, a fact of which he was inordinately proud. His father, Frank, a well-remembered Housemaster at Repton School, was Irish and a graduate in mathematics from Trinity College, Dublin. Pilkington's veneration of Ireland and things Irish is seen in his acquisition in 1933 of the MRCP (Ireland) in addition to the London MRCP. He went so far, in fact, as to write a short history of Ireland for the benefit of his children and grandchildren, which, unfortunately, he did not see fit to publish. Further evidence of his enthusiasm, if such be needed, is seen in the unmistakable Celtic names, bestowed on his three daughters, Cailin, Mairin and Ffiona.

Pilkington was educated at Clifton College and Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he read medicine. He completed his medical studies at King's

College Hospital, London, and qualified MRCS, LRCP in 1930. The next three to four years seem to have been spent achieving a veritable fistful of academic qualifications. In addition to the membership of the Royal Colleges of Ireland and London he took his Cambridge MB, BChir in 1934 and in the same year obtained the DPM (Eng). He was, incidentally, elected FRCPI in 1948 and FRCP in 1955.

Pilkington early on decided on a career in psychiatry and to this end trained at the Maudsley Hospital, London, where he had the exceedingly good fortune to be taught by two giants of English psychiatry, Professor Edward Mapother and Professor Sir Aubrey Lewis. During the 1939–45 War he served as a psychiatric specialist in the RAMC achieving the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. In the Army he came under the influence of Dr J. R. Rees, the Director of Army Psychiatry, another giant, albeit of a more gentle variety than his two previous mentors.

After demobilisation, Pilkington chose to exchange the cosseted comforts of academic psychiatry for the rigorous realities of mental hospital practice. After a period as Deputy Physician Superintendent at the Central Hospital, Warwick, he was appointed, in 1946, Physician Superintendent at Moorhaven Hospital, Devon, where his real life's work began.

This important chapter of his life is well-described in his presidential address to the Royal Medico-Psychological Association at its annual meeting in Plymouth on 10 July 1968. In lucid, and at times, lurid prose Pilkington illustrates how he was able to drag a backward and decrepit hospital out of the slough of despond into line with the most advanced mental hospitals of the post-War era, an era which has been termed, "The Golden Age of the British Mental Hospital". He writes, "Although the hospital was a 'modern' one compared with many, having been opened in 1891, the state of the buildings – wards, departments, the lot – was disgraceful, even dangerous; and tangled masses of coarse grass and evil-smelling weeds grew within the boundary walls of what were still known as "airing courts". Nor is this pen-picture of decrepitude and stagnation confined to the physical aspects of the hospital: the same could be applied to the morale of the staff, medical and nursing; to the state of nurse-training, and to the therapeutic opportunities, such as they were. As a further example of the aura of mediaevalism that obtained, Pilkington found to his horror that so absolute was his authority that no member of the nursing staff could marry without his express permission!

But the Golden Age was not to last. The last section of his address is headed, "The Years of Decline!", in which he describes the disastrous effects of the virtual death sentence imposed on the mental hospitals by the then Minister of Health, Mr Enoch

Powell. Ironically enough, the decline began with the implementation of the Mental Health Act, 1959, an Act which, in intent, was perhaps the most humane legislative instrument in the history of British psychiatry. The sense of bitter disappointment is well expressed in one of the last paragraphs of his address which, in the light of recent developments, has a prophetic tinge. He concludes, "Those who, like myself, have spent the major part of their careers in developing comprehensive community services based on their hospitals, cannot avoid the feeling, when their elimination is advocated, that an assault is threatened on the whole fabric of the service."

Despite his success in every department of his life, all who knew him, family and friends alike, pay tribute to his essential modesty. No better evidence of this endearing attribute could be found than his reply to a questionnaire circulated to all fellows of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. One of the questions posed was "Major Publications?", to which Pilkington replied, "Minor Publications only". It needs to be pointed out that, *inter alia*, Pilkington was the author of a successful history of Ashburton, Devon, now in its second edition. This slim, well-written and lavishly illustrated book is the outcome of over 40 years association with Ashburton and its environs.

In recognition of his invaluable services to the Plymouth area, Pilkington on his retirement from the NHS was elected Emeritus Consultant to the South West Regional Hospital Board.

Pilkington was predeceased by his wife, Elizabeth, who died in 1974, but is survived by his son, Ronald, and three daughters.

## References

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**ROBERT ORTON, formerly Physician in Psychological Medicine, Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle-upon-Tyne**

Robert Orton, who died 8 December 1991, was born on 4 December 1914; he was the only son of a Bradford dentist. He read medicine at the University of Leeds where he graduated MB, ChB in 1938. During his house job in his home town he met the theatre sister who subsequently became his wife.

He started general practice in Blackburn but with war imminent he decided to finance his forthcoming marriage by working at Storrs Hall. From there he volunteered for military service and was soon a regimental medical officer in Lincolnshire. He was