

Obituary

Editor: Henry R. Rollin

GEORGE MORRISON CARSTAIRS, formerly Professor of Psychological Medicine, University of Edinburgh

Morris Carstairs, who died on 17 April 1991, aged 74, had not much interest in shaping the narrow concerns of the psychiatric establishment and was not a College man. He was moved by the plight of the disadvantaged and saw psychiatry as one way of bettering their lot. His theatre was medicine as a whole and his messages were directed at a large public. Hence the wide appeal of his Reith lectures, *This Island Now*. Adopting a combined psychiatric and anthropological approach (he had been trained in both) he reflected on the current scene in Britain with a sharp focus and a broad tolerance that made many blush at their own obtuseness and intolerance. He was especially persuasive about accepting the behaviour of the young. This was 1962. When he suggested that pre-marital sexual intercourse might not be a prelude to personal or national disaster it caused something of a stir.

He was born in India and saw the unhappy conditions in which so many lived. *The Twice Born* enshrined his anthropological study of three Indian villages. He joined Aubrey Lewis's MRC social psychiatry unit at the Maudsley in 1953. The relationship between the two men was not easy but was always informed by mutual great respect. Lewis gave him the chance to help another dispossessed group, chronic psychotic patients in asylums. He would have scorned those substantial adjectives 'rehabilitation' and 'community' that trendy psychiatrists today place in front of psychiatry; these were not to be considered 'sub-specialities'; nevertheless, with colleagues in the MRC unit, he helped make the discoveries of the '50s that are now their stock-in-trade.

He went to the Chair of Psychological Medicine in Edinburgh in 1961, taking with him his newly formed MRC psychiatric epidemiology unit. Gathering round him some distinguished colleagues and uniting together academic and NHS psychiatrists in common purpose, he built the Edinburgh department into an important centre where research, good clinical practice, and both undergraduate and postgraduate education flourished. As a member of the Royal Commission on Medical Education he urged that students everywhere were properly exposed to psychiatry as part of medicine. He travelled a lot on behalf of WHO and as President of the World Federation of Mental Health.

In 1973 he went to York as Vice-Chancellor but felt somewhat a displaced person away from a medi-

cal school. Moreover it was difficult to sustain the role of guru in a climate of student protest. After five years he resigned and returned to India to advise WHO on setting up suitable psychiatric services. While there he revisited the Indian villages to survey changes. This research was later completed in the United States.

Carstairs was a most generous man, of his time, his ideas and his hospitality. He brought out the best in both colleagues and students for he was a gifted and stimulating teacher. This is why he is so warmly remembered. His wide range of interests was reflected in the wide circle of his friends. He had a particular interest in psychotic art and was an expert on the madness of Goya. Vera, his former wife, and their three children all supported him during his long and distressing illness.

NK

ROBERT WALLACE SIMPSON, formerly Senior Consultant Psychiatrist and Physician, Old Manor Hospital, Salisbury

Robert Wallace Simpson was born in Glasgow in 1919, the son of a solicitor. He was educated at Queen's Park High School, Glasgow and from there he went on to Glasgow University and Medical School. He qualified MB ChB in 1942 and was house physician at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary. He then joined the Royal Navy in which he served for ten years. He travelled widely and it was while in Ceylon that he met and married Betty. During his service in the Navy he became interested in psychiatry, and after obtaining his DPM in 1951, was appointed a specialist psychiatrist.

After the Navy he first worked at Knowle Hospital, where in 1955 he obtained his MD and in 1957 he was appointed consultant and medical administrator at the Old Manor Hospital where he worked until his retirement in 1981.

In addition to his work in the hospital he was active in the Royal College of Psychiatrists (he was elected a Foundation Fellow in 1971), being Secretary and later Chairman of the South West Division. He was for many years a member of the Mental Health Review Tribunal and indeed continued this work until shortly before his death. He was a member of Salisbury Hospitals' Management Team and Chairman of the Regional Psychiatric Committee, also Chairman of the Salisbury Medical Society. He became a Justice of the Peace and served on the Bench for 14 years.

That is the bare outline of Robert's life and work, but of course tribute should be paid to the whole man. To the southerner on first meeting, Robert appeared the epitome of the dour Scot, given to few words, not often expressing great emotion, but shrewd and firm. When one got to know him, however, one realised that behind all this lay an immense kindness and a desire to support and do his best for all those with whom he came in contact. He has been described as being a "great facilitator" so that once a person or a patient's course became clear he would give all the support necessary to achieve the desired end. He was not overly directive but his great skill as a clinician and administrator lay in his ability to persuade and lead, while allowing those he was leading to feel that they were willing and actively participating.

Robert lived and worked right through the great modernisation of psychiatry in this country with the explosion in pharmacological therapies and the opening-up of the old asylums.

When he came to the Old Manor Hospital it was only three years after it had been taken over by the National Health Service. Until 1954 it had been the largest private lunatic asylum in the South of England. When Robert arrived there almost every ward was locked and its seven hundred beds were mostly occupied by very long term patients. He played a great part in the many improvements at the Old Manor Hospital and, hand in hand, came the development of community psychiatric services. However, he continued to believe that asylum would always be necessary for some patients with mental illness and he was a great supporter of the idea of a therapeutic community. He rightly believed that the nursing and other staff within the hospital played a

central part in a patient's rehabilitation and return to good health.

Despite his many commitments, Robert remained essentially a family man, and took justifiable pride in the successful careers of his four sons, three of whom are members of the medical profession.

He will be mourned not only by his family and friends, but by all those who have every reason to be grateful for his understanding and care.

AJG

HARRY MARSHALL (Obituary, *Psychiatric Bulletin*, June 1991)

SS writes:

I met Harry Marshall at one of the medical meetings of the Lourdes Medical Association, of which we were both members, though he was not himself a Roman Catholic. I discussed with him then the possibility of his helping out the Metropolitan Tribunal of Westminster, the body responsible for assessing nullities of marriage on behalf of the Archdiocese of Westminster, with the psychiatric assessment of 'Acta', that is, documents sent regarding the failure of marriages which have been selected out as involving psychiatric issues. I look through and report on these Acta when I can, but take a long time over it. Harry, having agreed to assess Acta, was so assiduous that he did far more than any other psychiatrist – indeed, than all us other psychiatrists put together. So sorely has he been missed since his death that the Tribunal has arranged a meeting of as many psychiatrists as possible to get the whole thing started once more. His contribution, therefore, albeit non-Catholic, to the Roman Catholic Church in this respect was quite invaluable. Officials of the Tribunal were present at his funeral.

Miscellany

New publications

The Law Commission's Consultation Paper No. 119, *Mentally Incapacitated Adults and Decision Making: An Overview*, in published by HMSO, price £6.90.

The Family Planning Association has published a book giving legal guidelines about sex and people with learning difficulties entitled *Sex and the Law* by Michael Gunn, price £12.99.

Disasters – A Caring Response is published by HMSO, price £13.75, and can be obtained from HMSO bookshops and from Cruse-Bereavement Care, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond TW9 1UR. (Please add £1.70 postage and packing.)

The Mental Health Foundation has published four new titles in their Mental Health Matters series: *Problems with Tranquillisers*; *Problems of Alcohol*; *Dementia and the Family*; and *Mental Handicap and*

the Family. The booklets will be distributed nationally through general practitioners' waiting rooms.

Out of Harm's Way, MIND's Research into Police and Psychiatric Action under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act, is available from MIND Mail Order Service, 4th Floor, 24–32 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD, price £13.50 plus £1 postage and packing.

Supporting Self-Advocacy, edited by Andrea Whittaker, contains contributions by people with learning difficulties and by people working in supportive roles. It is available from Bailey Distribution Ltd, Department KFP, Learoyd Road, Mountfield Industrial Estate, New Romney, Kent TN28 8XU, price £6.50 plus 10% postage and packing, or over the counter at the King's Fund Centre, 126 Albert Street, London NW1 7NF.