

Psychiatry in pictures

EDITED BY ALLAN BEVERIDGE

Do you have an image, preferably accompanied by 100 to 200 words of explanatory text, that you think would be suitable for Psychiatry in Pictures? Submissions are very welcome and should be sent direct to Dr Allan Beveridge, Queen Margaret Hospital, Whitefield Road, Dunfermline, Fife KY12 0SU, UK.



Skating on Duddingston Loch by Charles Altamont Doyle (1832–1893)

Charles Altamont Doyle, the father of Arthur Conan Doyle, was a Victorian painter and illustrator. He spent his last years in Scottish asylums where he continued to paint and sketch. In the biographies of his famous son, Charles is usually portrayed as a gentle unworldly man whose fondness for the bottle led to him being shut away in a mental institution. However, recent research (Beveridge, 2006) suggests that Doyle suffered from memory impairment as a result of heavy drinking. This, combined with his generally unmanageable and violent behaviour when drunk, led to his eventual admission to a home for inebriates and then to an asylum. Charles Doyle was born in London in 1832 into an Irish Catholic family. His father John Doyle was a prominent political cartoonist and his brother Dicky became a celebrated illustrator for *Punch* and a noted exponent of the Victorian fairy genre. In 1849 Charles was sent by his family to Edinburgh where he met Mary Foley, whom he later married in 1855. They had nine children, the third child being Arthur, who was born in 1859. Charles was employed by the Scottish Office of Works and, in his spare time, he pursued his art. The above picture, which is a scene from Edinburgh life, was painted before Charles became institutionalised. The two subsequent issues of the *Journal* will feature work he completed while an inmate of Montrose Asylum.

Beveridge, A. (2006) What became of Arthur Conan Doyle's father? The last years of Charles Altamont Doyle. *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh*, 36, 264–270.

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