

Obituary

JOHN ARTHUR CLARK, Consultant Psychiatrist, Crichton Royal Hospital, Dumfries, Scotland.

Dr John A. Clark, Consultant Psychiatrist at Crichton Royal Hospital, Dumfries, died suddenly on 22 October 1983, aged 57. He had been a Consultant at Crichton Royal since 1958, coming from the Maudsley and Bethlem Hospital, London, where he was a Senior Registrar to the late Professor Sir Aubrey Lewis.

John Clark, a St Andrews University graduate, was deputy Physician Superintendent from 1966 to 1978, and Medical Administrator from 1978 to 1979. From 1978 until his death he was psychiatric tutor to the hospital, and was held in very high regard by the many junior doctors who owe him a great debt by his most painstaking and methodical work in putting together a comprehensive teaching programme.

John Clark was a member of many important working parties. He was on the Executive Committee of the Scottish Division, a regional adviser in psychiatry for the West of Scotland, and a member of the Area Health Board.

He was a very popular and most invaluable colleague, who was held in great esteem by everyone, not only as a skilful and devoted doctor, but as a most caring and compassionate person who will be greatly missed.

GSS

NATALIE COBBING, Secretary of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, 17 Belgrave Square, London SW1.

Miss Natalie Cobbing died at her home in Petersfield on 20 January 1984. She was Secretary of the RMPA since 1958, and continued as Secretary of the new Royal College from 1971 to the time of her death.

She was born in London in 1926, and was educated in Convent Schools in London and Aberystwyth. She saw wartime service in the WRNS and on return to civilian life, worked at the Regent Street Polytechnic until her appointment to the RMPA.

A colleague of mine observing Miss Cobbing walking along the street in the early 60s remarked to me, 'There goes the RMPA!' Having caught the atmosphere and seen the life of the Association at its Chandos Street headquarters in those days, I knew what he meant. Miss Cobbing, with one assistant, carried the work of Council, the Standing Committees, the Annual and Quarterly meetings, and kept an eye on the activities of Sections and Divisions. Here was no detached administrator, but a person of great energy and devotion who entered into the life of the professional body and made it her own. This close identification and single mindedness demands courage and toughness in an organization which is governed by a shifting population of Honorary Officers and a Council.

The mid 60s were dominated by the issue of the future of

the Association. Should we continue unchanged, or become a faculty of the RCP London, or become a Royal College? The arguments were intense, and at times bitter. There was an air of popular revolution and a need for cool steady guidance. Miss Cobbing helped to provide just that, and after many difficulties and setbacks the College was born.

Problems crowded in to do with finance; the new MRCPsych. Diploma; the anger of many who felt disenfranchised; the need to expand the Secretariat to deal with the rapidly growing responsibilities and functions of a Royal College.

Termination of our lease at Chandos House demanded an urgent search for a permanent home, followed by the immense task of moving and making the new house in Belgrave Square habitable and shipshape. The set-up today is a far cry from those early years in Chandos Street: a staff of 30; several departments; an organization fulfilling all the manifold responsibilities of a Royal College and respected by its peers.

Behind the professional devotion and organizational prowess which has made all this possible, there lay a burning, passionate concern for the welfare of the mentally disordered, the elderly, and the disadvantaged. This found expression, not only in her work, but in her private life where many acts of selfless kindness to friends and acquaintances may be recorded. Her appointment as Secretary to the All Party Parliamentary Mental Health Group was a facet of this concern.

Her earlier private life was full of energetic pursuits with an air of challenge: mountaineering, skiing, crossing steep glaciers on ropes. Stamp collecting provided a restful contrast.

I have known Natalie Cobbing almost since the time of her appointment to the RMPA. My involvement with that body, and with the College in various capacities, gave me the privilege of a close working relationship with her over many years. One came to take her for granted, the 'continuity girl' with her conscientious, relentless hard work, her immense knowledge of the organization, her eye both for detail and for grand strategy, her sensitive and kindly response to members who sought her help and advice.

Her unexpected death at 57 has cruelly deprived the psychiatric profession in this country of a most loyal and devoted champion and friend. We extend our condolences to her cousins living in the UK and the USA.

KR

FRANCIS LEO McLAUGHLIN, retired, formerly Consultant Psychiatrist, St Vincent's Hospital, Dublin, Eire.

Frank McLaughlin died at the age of 83 on 29 October 1983.