

secretary of the CTC at the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

July 1990

OLA JUNAID
Honorary Secretary
Collegiate Trainees' Committee

Reference

SCOTT, J. (1986) The functions of the Collegiate Trainees' Committee. *Bulletin of the Royal College of Psychiatrists*, 10, 64.

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Obituary

Editor: Henry R. Rollin

THOMAS FORREST MAIN, formerly Medical Director, Cassel Hospital, Surrey



When Dr Thomas Forrest Main, or Tom Main as he was affectionately known the world over, died at his home in London in May 1990, his considerable stature in the fields of psychiatry and psychoanalysis had been well established and had earned him a reputation of the highest order both nationally and internationally. When we

remember Tom Main we think of the Cassel Hospital and when we hear of the work of the Cassel Hospital we remember Tom Main. It was there, over a period of some 30 years, that he applied his considerable intellect, his innate curiosity and perceptiveness, together with his psychoanalytic understanding of individuals, groups and institutions to create and develop a hospital setting which became acknowledged as a model institution and organisation for the care and treatment of the psychiatrically ill person.

Tom Main was born in Northumberland in 1911 and qualified in medicine at Durham University in 1933. He soon entered his chosen field, psychiatry, where his qualities were soon recognised and led to his being appointed as the youngest medical superintendent of his time. In 1940, following the outbreak of war, he joined the RAMC and became Psychiatric Advisor to the 21st Army Group responsible for training army psychiatrists and medical officers in the handling of acute psychiatric casualties and planning for the demands on psychiatric services in the Normandy campaign.

Early in 1945, as the war drew to a close, Lieut Col Main, as he now was, was posted to Northfield, a large military psychiatric hospital just outside Birmingham. His remit was to help the development of group studies in the care and treatment of psychiatrically disturbed servicemen. It was there that he began to formulate and develop his ideas on the institution as a therapeutic environment. This was later referred to as the Second Northfield Experiment and has been written up by Main and others (The First Northfield Experiment was conducted by Wilfred Bion). Main had from his earliest days as a psychiatrist a serious interest in psychoanalysis, and during the war had met and had close working relationships with many psychoanalytic thinkers and practitioners. It followed naturally that, at the end of the war, he began his own psychoanalytic training. He was initially in analysis with Susan Isaacs, then later with Michael Balint, and in addition he had supervision with Anna Freud, Melanie Klein and Paula Heimann.

In 1946 Main was appointed Medical Director of the Cassel Hospital. It was there that his creative and innovative ideas came to fruition, with the development of his concept of the therapeutic community, his evolutionary ideas on nurse training and practice as a result of which the traditional nursing role changed and grew into a more dynamic psychosocial role. It was in this way that he developed a hospital climate where the doctor could study and take a wider perspective of his role within the total environment.

It was within this developing hospital culture that an extraordinary event occurred which led to quite revolutionary changes in attitudes and practice both within the hospital itself and in psychiatry in general. In 1950 a woman, due to be admitted with a severe psycho-neurotic illness, arrived at the hospital with her very young child and explained that she had

no-one at home to look after it. It seemed natural to both Tom Main and his nursing staff that a mother and child should be together and, having given due consideration to the many issues involved, both were admitted. From this event many carefully considered developments took place, one of which was the formal establishment of an in-patient family unit.

It was also in the field of training that Tom Main won respect and admiration. Almost a quarter of the members of the British Psychoanalytic Society have been on the staff of the Cassel and have at one time or another been trained by him. Again, there was his well known work with general practitioners and doctors working in the Family Planning Association, where he employed the training seminar techniques developed by Balint. It was here that he used his psychoanalytic insights to help the general practitioner study, and have a fuller understanding of, the doctor/patient relationship and its transactions. On the other hand with the doctors concerned in the Family Planning Association, he not only helped them study and understand the psycho-sexual problems of their patients, but also showed how to develop new techniques of treatment. Later, he helped found the Institute of Psychosexual Medicine of which he was Life President.

A few months ago, a selection of 16 papers was published out of the 50 or more papers written by Main. Although some of them were written over 30 years ago, they remain fresh and pertinent to the

issues of today. While 'The Ailment' might be among the better known, his paper 'Psychoanalysis as a Crossbearing', which was presented to the Royal Medico-Psychological Association in 1967, was particularly important in bridging the gap between psychiatry and psychoanalysis, a gap that Main sought to bridge in so much of his work throughout his career.

Following his retirement from the National Health Service, Main continued his work with the Institute of Psychosexual Medicine, with general practitioner seminars and he continued to psychoanalyse his patients until just a few weeks before he died. He faced his death as he had faced life, with courage, curiosity and anger at losing his loved ones.

He leaves behind his wife, Dr Agnes M. (Molly) Main and four children. He first met his wife when they were both medical students and she too practised as a psychoanalyst. Of their four children two became psychiatrists, one of whom, Jennifer, is also a psychoanalyst and was responsible for the publication of the selection of Main's papers mentioned above.

Many honours were bestowed upon Tom Main, including Fellowships and travelling Professorships. He was Vice-President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, from 1973–75 and chairman of the Psychotherapy and Social Psychiatry Section from 1955–57 and from 1968–70. In addition, he was editor of the *British Journal of Medical Psychology* and a founder member of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations.

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Lecture

The British Psycho-Analytical Society announce that Richard Holmes will give the 1990 Ernest Jones Lecture *Biographer's Footsteps* at Friends House,

Euston Road, London NW1 on 7 November 1990 at 8 p.m. Admission is free.

Seminars

A seminar entitled *Anxiety and Depression: from basics and clinical research to therapeutic trials of new anxiolytics* will be held on 26 October 1990 (speakers Drs David Nutt, Stuart Montgomery and Sheila Handley) and one on *Benzodiazepine Dependence: the critical issues* on 22 November 1990 (speakers

Diana Brahams, Drs David Nutt and Peter Tyrer). Both seminars will be at the Cavendish Hotel, Jermyn Street, London W1. Registration: Management Forum Ltd, 48 Woodbridge Road, Guildford, Surrey GU1 4RL (telephone 0483 570099; fax 0483 36424).