
Obituaries

John Clifford Sawle Thomas, formerly Consultant Psychiatrist, Princess Alexandra Hospital, Harlow, and St Margaret's Hospital, Epping



John Clifford Sawle Thomas, one of the most distinguished psychiatrists of his generation, died of cancer on the eve of his 87th birthday on 20 January 1994.

Thomas (known invariably as 'Tommy' to his colleagues in the RAF) was born on 21 January 1907 in London of mixed Welsh/Cornish parentage. He was educated at St Paul's School and studied medicine at St Bartholomew's Hospital, qualifying MRCS

Eng LRCP Lond in 1932. Not long after qualification he decided on a career in psychiatry and gained the DPM Eng in 1937. Despite his involvement in his speciality he found time to continue his studies in general medicine and was elected MRCP (Lond) in 1943 proceeding to the FRCP in 1966. In 1971 he was elected to the Foundation Fellowship of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Sawle Thomas' career was in some ways unusual. He progressed very quickly up the conventional ladder in institutional psychiatry. He held appointments first at Stone, Aylesbury, where he worked under Dr Ian Skottowe; then at Littlemore, Oxford, under Dr R. W. Armstrong; then as Deputy-Superintendent at St Crispin Hospital (Berrywood Hospital, as was), and finally, after the war, he was appointed Physician Superintendent at St Nicholas' Hospital, Newcastle.

Less conventional for those days was his string of prestigious appointments outside institutional psychiatry. During the war he was commissioned in the RAFVR and served as a neuropsychiatrist, achieving the rank of Wing Commander. Then, at different times, he served as Regional Psychiatrist to the North East Metropolitan Board and as a member of the Parole Board. Finally until his retirement, in addition to private practice, he was Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist to Princess

Alexandra's Hospital, Harlow and St Margaret's Hospital, Epping.

Sawle Thomas was twice married. His first marriage to Maryon Elliot ended in divorce. In 1953 he married Dr Eva Waller, herself a consultant psychiatrist and a MRCPsych (the charmingly informal photograph was taken at Brighton in 1953, presumably on their honeymoon). The marriage was eminently successful and Eva's death in 1986 was a devastating blow from which he never really recovered. His unhappiness was compounded shortly afterwards by a succession of strokes which affected his speech, mobility and his intellect. And if that were not enough he latterly developed a squamous cell carcinoma of his face which delivered the *coup de grâce*.

Tommy was a rounded man as witness his multitude of interests outside his professional work. He loved literature and music, and in his retirement played bridge at a high level. Less cerebral perhaps was his newfound proficiency with a croquet mallet.

He is survived by his daughter Carole and his son Mark, the two children of his first marriage, together with seven grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

Ebben Roderic-Evans, formerly Consultant Psychiatrist, Cane Hill Hospital, Surrey



Ebben Roderic-Evans, or Roddy as he was affectionately known, devoted the greater part of his professional life to the care of the long-term mentally ill. For 23 years he worked as a consultant psychiatrist at Cane Hill.

He was born on 13 August 1924 in Tregaron, Dyfed, Wales, into a farming family, although his uncle was a well known cardiologist. He trained at UCH between 1942/1947 (MRCS Eng LRCP Lond 1947 MB BS Lond 1950). He was commissioned in the RAMC and posted to Moashar, Egypt. After demobilisation he took up locum posts in

psychiatry and the subject rapidly caught his fancy and he trained as a registrar at UCH and then as a senior registrar at the Middlesex Hospital between 1952/1955. He gained the DPM Lond in 1957 and the MRCPsych in 1971. He proceeded to the Fellowship in 1975. In 1952 he was awarded the MD Lond.

Soon after he took up his appointment at Cane Hill he developed a keen interest in the problems of rehabilitation and he began to set up programmes for patients with chronic schizophrenia which emphasised training in the basic skills of living of which the process of institutionalisation had so cruelly deprived them.

In the early 1960s he was among the first to conduct pioneering experiments in discharging patients out of the long-stay wards into group homes, initially sited within the grounds of the hospital, but later situated in the community. At the same time he made the then revolutionary proposal that his ward sisters should visit patients in these homes on a regular basis and in so doing helped set in motion the community psychiatric nursing movement. A similar more publicised venture in asking ward sisters to visit patients in the community had also recently started at Warlingham Park Hospital, but the contribution of Roddy in starting the CPN movement should not be forgotten. Always an innovator of services, soon after the publication of the Butler report, he opened one of the very first regional secure units in the country at Cane Hill and this unit continues to prosper to this day.

Roddy was a deeply religious and very compassionate man, his generosity extending not only to his patients, but also to the many junior doctors from distant and developing nations who were often homesick, and for whom he always had a sympathetic ear; often he would invite them into the warmth of his own family home. He had a delightful and impish sense of humour which gave great pleasure to all who came in contact with him. He was also a cultured and widely read

man and had a great love for poetry, a particular favourite being his fellow Welshman, Dylan Thomas. Always thoughtful and a supreme diplomat, his administrative skills were widely recognised. He was asked to join the Hospital Advisory Service and served as a full-time member of four separate secondments during the 1970s.

After a heart attack in 1975, he retired from his full-time NHS post in 1981 and took up his new interest in forensic psychiatry and assumed the position of part-time psychiatrist at Holloway Prison where he ran the in-patient unit for a number of years. In 1984, as the hospital closure programme was gathering momentum, his colleagues at Cane Hill Hospital once more sought his counsel and asked him to assess the needs of some of the more problematic, long-standing cases. This task he accomplished with ease as he knew all the patients so well, and so laid the foundations for the later successful and uneventful closure of the hospital. In his retirement he also took an interest in the training of others in the caring professions and served as an adviser to the UKCC for nursing midwifery and health visiting.

Roddy was always a keen gardener who took much pleasure in growing his own vegetables. A connoisseur of good wines, he was a member of the Wine Society and he often made trips to well-known French vineyards. A good linguist who taught himself French, Spanish and Italian as well as being bilingual from an early age in his native Welsh and English.

He died on 18 January 1994 aged 69 and is survived by his wife, Audrey, who worked for many years as Director of Nursing at the National Hospital, Queen Square, and by his two daughters, Jane and Susan; Jane has followed him into the medical profession as a general practitioner.

G.S. STEIN