
Obituary

William Malcolm Millar, formerly Professor of Psychiatry, University of Aberdeen

Malcolm Millar, who died on the 24 January 1996, became Crombie Ross Professor of Psychiatry at Aberdeen in 1949, at the age of 36, becoming the third professor of psychiatry in Scotland, and the youngest in the UK. He held the position for the next 27 years, during which time he transformed the Aberdeen psychiatric scene. He was not an academic psychiatrist; he wrote few scientific papers and conducted little psychiatric research. His strengths lay in his clinical, teaching and administrative abilities. He was one of the most psychodynamic of British professors. While in the Royal Army Medical Corps in Edinburgh he had a year of personal analysis with Ronald Fairbairn. Thereafter, he read widely and had many close contacts in the psychodynamic field, particularly J. D. (Jock) Sutherland, whom he greatly admired.

Shortly after his birth, on 20 April 1913, his family emigrated to South Africa, where his father died when he was quite young. He returned to Edinburgh, and was a pupil at George Heriot's School. He attended Edinburgh University and graduated in medicine in 1936. He trained in psychiatry under Professor David Henderson, and gained high commendation for his MD thesis on aspects of the physical treatment of schizophrenia. The war prevented his taking up a Rockefeller Scholarship to study electro-encephalography in the USA. Instead he joined the RAMC in 1939, and became a psychiatric specialist, attaining the rank of major. Like Bowlby and Sutherland, he worked on officer selection procedures, and endeavoured, as he put it, to put the chi into psychiatry. The work generated such reports as *A Rating Scale in Personality Assessment*, *A Critique of Leaderless Group Testing* and *A Training Manual of Officer Selection*. In 1941, he married Catherine (Rena) Rankin.

In 1946, he moved to Aberdeen, where he was to spend the rest of his life. He took up the appointment of Senior Lecturer, in the newly created Department of Mental Health, and took over from Professor D. R. MacCalman as Head of the Department, three years later. At that time, psychiatric services in the city were minimal. There were the two large mental hospitals of Kingseat and the Royal Cornhill, and a few beds at the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. Over the next 10 years, against considerable opposition, he

brought about many changes. In 1950, he created what became the Aberdeen Association for Mental Health, the aims of which were the provision of rehabilitation services, both day and residential, for former psychiatric patients; the training of volunteers in a range of psychiatric services; and the education of the public in mental health matters.

It must have been a moment of some pleasure for him when, in 1959, following much planning and collaboration with his NHS colleagues, the Ross Clinic was opened. This was an early treatment and neurosis unit, set in the grounds of the Royal Cornhill Hospital. It had 38 beds, provision for 20 day-patients, consulting rooms and activities areas. It became a focal point for both academic and clinical psychiatry, and was a stimulating environment for both undergraduate and postgraduate education. It housed departments of clinical psychology, occupational therapy and art therapy. Joyce Laing's was the first art therapy post in Scotland, and one of the first in the UK.

His next venture was the setting up, in 1963, of the North East of Scotland Psychiatric Case Register, again in collaboration with many NHS and academic colleagues. Two smaller case registers had already been set up in Nottingham and Salford, but this was a larger and more ambitious enterprise. It was expertly managed and developed by John Baldwin and George Innes. Initially housed in a large house, as its staff and equipment grew, it was transferred to a custom-built site, again in the grounds of the Royal Cornhill, which became the Mental Health Research Unit. Such was the reputation of John Baldwin and his team, that the 1969 International Symposium of Psychiatric Epidemiology was held in Aberdeen.

In 1965, he realised a long-held ambition of establishing in Aberdeen a university-based diploma course in psychotherapy. It was to be the first of its kind in the UK. Initially a one-year, full-time course, it later was modified to a two-year, part-time one, in order that attendance could be combined with a paid, clinical post. The course was hampered by a shortage of both funding and trained psychotherapy staff. The course coordinator, Richard Mackie, was paid to travel fortnightly to the Tavistock Clinic in London to continue his psychotherapy training, and later a course graduate, Jim Gomersall, was made a lecturer, and Bill Ogston, who had gone to the USA to train in psychotherapy, was

enticed back to take up another senior lecturer post. Ken Morrice, who had worked in the therapeutic community at Dingleton Hospital, was appointed to run the day hospital. Everyone worked with great enthusiasm, and for a time, there was a buoyant atmosphere in the Ross Clinic. On two memorable occasions, Michael Balint, first with a group of general practitioners, and later with a group of medical students, were transported to Aberdeen to demonstrate their work, but by 1970, the course had run into serious difficulties and Malcolm became very disappointed. Eventually the course revived and continued until 1983.

Through difficult times, he was sustained by his faith. A son of the manse, who had once considered training as a missionary, he remained, throughout his life, an active churchgoer. He developed a close collaboration with David Cairns, Professor of Practical Theology at Aberdeen University, which not only affected training for the ministry, but also encouraged cooperation between clergy and doctors, and promoted research. One of their students, Dr Frances MacNab, founded in Melbourne, Australia, an institute named after them. It is concerned with counselling, psychotherapy and education in relationships.

In the course of an intensely active career, he performed numerous duties, and gained many honours and distinctions. He was a member of the University Court and, from 1965 to 1968, he was a popular and innovative Dean of the Medical Faculty. He served on the Scottish Probation Council, the Scottish Health Services Council, the Scottish Advisory Committee on Medical Research, the Board of Control and its successor, the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland. He served on the Dunlop Committee, which influenced the 1960 Mental Health (Scotland) Act. He also served on committees concerned with mental health services for the elderly and moral and religious education in schools. Nationally, he served on the General Medical Council, the Medical Research Council, and the University Grants Committee and was, for a time, adviser to the Institute of Psychiatry in London. Internationally, he advised the Universities of Adelaide, Malaysia and the West Indies. He was a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the British Psychological Society. He also received the CBE.

One of his unrealised dreams was to make Aberdeen a centre for psychotherapy. It was not until the year of his retirement (1976), that the first psychoanalytically trained, consultant psychotherapist, Dr William Brough, was appointed to the local health services. Dr Jane Thompson, an Aberdeen Medical graduate who shared his dream, left in her will the money to establish a

chair in psychotherapy, but the chair did not materialise. Dr Thompson also left funds for an annual Malcolm Millar Lecture in Psychotherapy, and this was started in 1979. David Alexander, a clinical psychologist and former supervisor on the Aberdeen psychotherapy course, was eventually appointed Professor of Mental Health (Psychotherapy).

This is the story, but what of the man? He was kind and unassuming, quietly spoken, with sparkling eyes and a disarming smile. (The expression on the accompanying photograph is typical.) He was dignified and courteous, but able to exercise his authority when he needed to. He was committed to his work, but compassionate to his patients. He once told the story of how concerned he was about a patient that he went to his office one night and sat there with the light on. Eventually, the patient came. He was happy to delegate to others those tasks he was not good at himself. Consequently, he accumulated around him a team of able colleagues, whom he encouraged and supported. He was a dedicated and inspiring teacher, reflected in the fact that a high proportion of Aberdeen graduates chose psychiatry as a profession. He was open to new ideas and was, atypically among psychiatrists, excited by Ronald Laing's book, *The Divided Self*, when it came out in 1965. He was a simple-living, family man. He and Rena lived in a delightful house in old Aberdeen, where they were excellent hosts, until Rena died in 1979. They had six children, two sons and four daughters. He was proud that his son Harry chose also to become a psychiatrist. In later years, he married his former secretary, Helen Ramsay, and spent with her a peaceful and happy retirement.

JOHN BIRCHNELL and DOUGLAS HALDANE

The deaths of the following have also been reported

ANN CRAFT, Department of Learning Disabilities, Nottingham University

EMANUEL FISCHER, Old South Mead Road, Rosebay, New South Wales

ALBERT KUSHLICK, Thornbury Avenue, Shirley, Hampshire

NOEL IGNATIUS LAVIN, Brookwood Hospital, Woking, Surrey

JOHN DOUGLAS LUCY, (retired) Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

COLIN McCANCE, (retired) Royal Cornhill Hospital, Aberdeen

JOAN McCONNELL, (retired) Rampton Hospital, Retford, Nottinghamshire

DERMOT JOSEPH McDONNELL, Department of Child and Family Psychiatry, Thurlow House, Norfolk

MERVYN McILVENNA, St Loman's Hospital, Mullinger, County Westmeath, Eire

WILLIAM MORISON McINTYRE, (retired) Maudsley Hospital, London

JAMES BARR McWHINNIE, (retired) Highfield Family and Adolescent Unit, Warneford Hospital, Headington, Oxford

JEAN PASMORE, (retired) Ham Gate Avenue, Ham Common, Richmond, Surrey

BARBARA RICHARDSON, (retired) Child Guidance Clinic, Scarborough, North Yorkshire

CONSTANCE DIX ROBERTS, Hellesdon Hospital, Norwich

JAMES FINLAY ROBERTSON, Wonthaggi Medical Centre, Victoria, Australia

JOHN ROMANO, (retired) Strong Memorial Hospital School of Medicine and Dentistry, Rochester, New York, USA

WILLIAM CLIFFORD MUNRO SCOTT, (retired) Mount Pleasant, Westmount, Quebec, Canada

SHIRLEY SEATON, (retired) Manchester Royal Infirmary

ABDUR RAZZAQUE SIDDIQUI, Department of Psychiatry, St Boniface Hospital, 409 Tache Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

DAPHNE SMEDBERG, (retired) Cane Hill Hospital, Surrey

CHARLOTTE STAGE, Ved Vigen 2, 2400 Copenhagen NV, Denmark

SINCLAIR STEWART SUTHERLAND, (retired) Hartwood Hospital, Lanarkshire

THEUNIS JEREMIA VAN DE MERWE, Department of Psychiatry, University of Pretoria, Weskoppies Psychiatric Hospital, Pretoria, South Africa

JULIUS EDWARD VINCENZI, (retired) St John's Hospital, Essex

ERIC ALEXANDER MASTERTON WOOD, Andrew Duncan Clinic, Royal Edinburgh Hospital