

Obituary

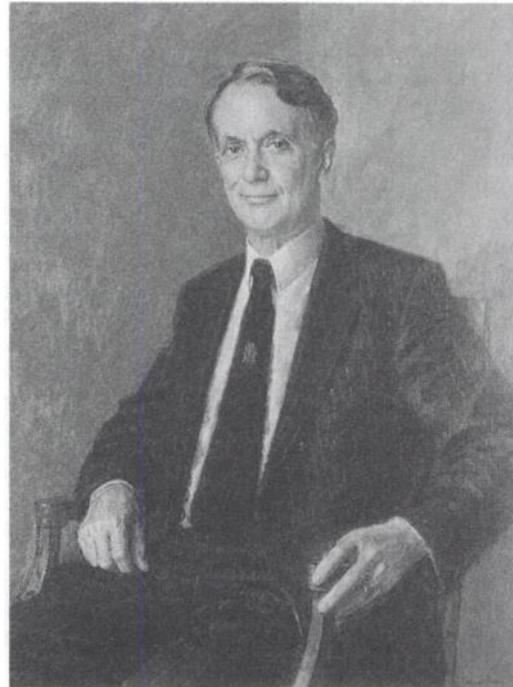
Editor: Henry R. Rollin

KENNETH RAWNSLEY, CBE, formerly Professor of Psychiatry in the Welsh National School of Medicine and President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists

Kenneth Rawnsley served with high distinction as the fourth President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists (1981–1984). He made full use of his opportunities to carry forward the powerful contribution he had made as Dean in the early formative years of the College's life (1972–1977). He played a major role in creating the system of inspection and approval of the quality of the clinical and educational facilities provided in psychiatric hospitals, not only for those preparing for the Membership examination, but for all junior staff training for a career in psychiatry. This was no easy task. Many regional health authorities felt secure in their complacent assumption that the facilities provided were all that could be reasonably expected of them. It took time to sink in that unless standards in respect of staffing, supervision, time for study, library facilities, and clinical conferences reached, or were elevated, to levels defined as acceptable by the College's of Electors and Education Committees, hospitals would fail to secure recognition as places of training and applications for their junior posts, indispensable for running their hospitals, would decline and vanish. There were appeals, objections and protests. Ken, with the full support of the College's committees behind him, responded with sensibility and understanding for the difficult predicament in which many hospitals were placed. Generous periods of reprieve were allowed in most cases to enable hospitals and regional authorities to improve their facilities. The majority were approved on subsequent visits. In the process to improve, not only training but the standard and quality of patient care in hospitals in every part of the land transformed.

The generosity with which he gave his time to trainees who wished to see him and the humane and practical concern with which he approached their problems became widely known. The force of Ken's example created a pattern of life and work in the Deanship not easy to follow. The College has been fortunate indeed in the succession of men and women of outstanding ability who were subsequently to serve in the Deanship.

There was more turbulence and conflict during the first few years in his life with the Royal College than might have appeared on the surface. There were criticisms on Council of the plans for evaluating the



suitability of hospitals for training. Some members from mental hospitals feared a gadarene rush to the academic centres leaving them bereft of staff. A few officers agonised about the burden the College would take on in trying to acquire premises from which to conduct its work. The treasurer feared we would be rendered bankrupt. There were disputes about the Membership examination. One of the senior officers with a record of many years of valuable work for the RMPA resigned. I had to go it alone taking a few urgent decisions, such as the bid for 17 Belgrave Square and floating the loan to acquire it, and in the development of the dialogues we had with the Department of Health, and seek endorsement later. Ken and I met often. We understood each other and agreed on the major policy issues. I gave unqualified support to all his proposals and he proved a staunch ally. His adamant integrity and loyalty contributed substantially to the emergence of a unified, determined and enthusiastic leadership that succeeded in laying down solid foundations in our formative years.

Ken was not a man who staked claims. But his qualities of leadership, his talents as an administrator and chairman of committees and his quiet strength and personal integrity had made a deep impression. He was clearly of presidential stature and was elected in succession to Desmond Pond in 1981.

He assumed the presidential role with modesty and a natural authority. Being devoid of arrogance he had not the slightest need for assertion or confrontation. Unlike the councils of some other colleges ours is a vociferously eloquent, active, argumentative, splendid, but at times, difficult lot. Ken's unflinching respect for individuals, his clarity of mind and his gentleness brought order and cohesion. He was the sort of man with whom men in Whitehall liked to deal. The influence of the College expanded during his years in office. Having an unswerving dedicated commitment to any responsibilities he shouldered, and any causes he espoused, he carried further the work of advancing the College's role in the improvement of postgraduate psychiatric education in his role as chairman of Council, Court of Electors and the Joint Higher Committee for Psychiatric Education. It soon became evident on committees that he could decide. But he always listened first, and he listened well.

He took a leading part in the campaign for termination of the abuse of psychiatry in the Soviet Union and proposed the motion for its expulsion from the World Psychiatric Association at the meeting in 1984. He ensured that their return would be conditional upon evidence that wide ranging reforms had been introduced.

Kenneth Rawnsley was educated at Burnley Grammar School. Traces of his northern origins sometimes became manifest in a certain blunt directness of speech that brought acrimonious and fruitless debates to an abrupt end. A State Scholarship took him to Manchester University. He qualified in 1948 and secured Membership of the Royal College of Physicians (London) in 1951 and the Fellowship in 1967. Training in the Department of Psychiatry in Manchester under the direction of E. W. Anderson provided him with a broad base. He acquired the discipline of European psychiatric phenomenology, of which Anderson was a learned though perhaps rigid exponent, but also the psychobiology of Adolf Meyer. To this and the training received at the Maudsley Ken brought his own personal synthesis, and in clinical practice and his field work in epidemiology a deep rooted humanity and compassion. These were the ingredients of the rich and distinctive quality of his teaching.

After working for a few months as a field investigator on the Stirling County Epidemiological Project in Canada he returned to the Institute of Psychiatry as a member of Aubrey Lewis' Medical Research Council Social Psychiatry Unit, at first in London,

and from 1957 in Cardiff. In Wales his northern upbringing provided him with ready access to the way of life, traditions and mores of miners in the Welsh valleys of the Rhondda and the Vale of Glamorgan. In collaboration with Joe Loudon and Jack Ingham, he compared and contrasted psychiatric morbidity in these two settings employing some novel techniques. The papers which embodied these findings made noteworthy contributions to psychiatric epidemiology.

In 1964, while continuing as Head of the MRC Social Psychiatry Research Unit, Rawnsley was appointed to the first Chair of Psychiatry in the Welsh National School of Medicine. He established a vigorous, widely-based academic department closely integrated with the psychiatric services of South Glamorgan and a special teaching and research unit at Whitchurch Mental Hospital. This last link enabled him to inject new strength into the scientific investigation which had flourished there with distinction since the early years in the history of Whitchurch. This integration of clinical practice, teaching and research with the local mental hospital showed imaginative foresight. The time has already arrived for academic psychiatry and psychiatric services as a whole to consider the Cardiff alliance as a model for emulation.

Wide recognition of his many sided achievements is reflected in the units named after him in Wales and also in Manchester. He was further honoured by his election as Vice-Provost, an honorary doctor at the Welsh College of Medicine and Honorary Fellowship of our Royal College.

It would take a separate article to list all the committees he chaired and the organisations he served. He was a Member of the Merrison Committee of Enquiry into the Regulation of the Medical Profession (1972–75) and the Warnock Enquiry into Human Fertilisation (1982–84). His services as Consultant to the World Health Organisation on many of its psychiatric projects and his participation in a large number of DHSS and MRC research committees give some indication of the range of the influence he exerted and the volume of creative effort he managed to pack into a career cut tragically short by illness and premature death.

During the retirement enforced by cancer he gave unsparingly his energy and used his tact and sensitivity and humane concern to create and manage the National Counselling Service for Sick Doctors. This provided help of inestimable value on a confidential basis to support, restore and rehabilitate doctors incapacitated by illness.

Shortly before his retirement in 1985 Ken and I met by chance in a London club. What began as a chat developed into a three hour talk in which Ken unburdened his inner feelings and spoke about his plans for what he squarely faced might be a future of

no more than a few years. The pain and discomfort had not proved much of a problem. He was concerned to make the right decisions about the way he was to live in the time that remained. His surgeons remained hopeful, but he noted their reservations. He had already decided to retire. He wanted to share more time with his family and deepen relationships that were already strong. He had rediscovered a passion for music that had been stirred in adolescence. He planned to take piano lessons. He had a powerful inner urge to retrace the course his life had followed so as to define the purposes and values that had motivated and inspired him. He was engaged in a search for any meaningful link there might be between his own life and the general order of things. He was embarking upon a long and arduous journey which was not to reach its destination until he was on his death bed. When we subsequently met he often referred to our talk in 1985.

In Kenneth Rawnsley's premature death our discipline has lost a man graced by distinction of mind and presence and rare qualities of leadership. His talents advanced psychiatry on several fronts. His sensibility and humane and generous spirit entered naturally into his clinical work, his teaching, his research and his personal relationships. He inspired love and respect in all those who worked with him in our field as well as those with whom his deepest bonds had been forged. The seminal contribution he made to the life of the Royal College of Psychiatrists continues to be manifest in a number of

its most fruitful activities. His life and work will not be forgotten.

MARTIN ROTH

There will be a Service of Thanksgiving for Professor Kenneth Rawnsley, CBE, Past-President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, on Friday, 23 October 1992 at 12 noon in St. Paul's Church, Wilton Place, Knightsbridge, London SW1. All Members of the College are welcome to attend this service and a buffet lunch which will be served after the Service at the College.

The deaths of the following have also been reported:

ARTHUR GRAHAM, formerly Consultant Psychiatrist; "Garrybeg", Rocky Valley, Kilmacanoque, Co Wicklow, Republic of Ireland.

STEPHEN WILLIAM GREEN, Clinical Assistant, Edward Long Fox House, Royal Hospital, Weston Super Mare BS23 4NF.

SIMON THOMAS MASTERSON, Senior House Officer; 73 Hubert Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6EE.

MEGH RAJ, 34 Punjabi Bagh, Patiala 147001, Punjab, India.

JACOB DOV WALDMAN, Consultant Psychiatrist, Tottenham Child Guidance Clinic, Medical Centre, 28 Phillip Lane, London N15 4JB.