DEPARTMENT OF ARMY PSYCHIATRY

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The Department of Army Psychiatry is the youngest in the Royal Army Medical College, just as the Directorate of Army Psychiatry in 1942 became the newest of the War Office Medical Directorates. Its creation followed the growth of military psychiatry during the war and the insight of doctors and administrators into the contributions of preventive and curative psychiatry to the maintenance of human efficiency in the fighting services. The early years of this new specialty were difficult, dogged by uninformed criticism and prejudice, and the foundation of the Department of Army Psychiatry in 1946 represented official approval of this controversial expansion of military medicine. Appropriately the first Reader in Army Psychiatry at the College is now the Civilian Consultant Psychiatrist to the Army. In common with the other departments, the title of Reader was changed in 1951 to that of Assistant Professor, while the more executive functions of the professor in this subject were contained in those of the Director of Army Psychiatry at the War Office.

With the wealth of pathological and control material readily available from army sources, the systematic compilation of data on the psychology of the soldier in peace, still a new field, was a main point in the original charter of the Department. With this in view, Mr. Basil Clarke was appointed Clinical Psychologist to the Department in 1948; besides teaching, he standardized methods of psychological testing and started several useful research projects. He resigned in 1958 when his post was transferred to the establishment of Netley, where it was more urgently needed. In 1949 the Department moved into the more spacious, if semi-subterranean, room in the basement of the Commandant's House, from which it has so far resisted periodic attempts at eviction.

The Heads of this Department have been given a remarkably free hand in their choice of professional activities, and each reader or assistant professor has made his characteristic contribution to the teaching and investigation of all aspects of service psychiatry. One of the more valuable innovations, introduced by Lieut.-Colonel Chevens was the periodical circulation to all army psychiatrists of Excerpta Psychiatrica, a collection of abstracts of articles from many sources. Apart from post-graduate lectures and clinical and advisory functions in the Queen Alexandra Military Hospital, the value of the Department lies in the opportunities for close liaison with other consultants, and in the great scope for research into the special stresses of a military society. In 1958 the appointments of Assistant Professor of Army Psychiatry and Command Psychiatrist, Eastern Command, were combined for the better provision of both teaching and clinical facilities, a significant step.

The roots of the Department stretch beyond its fifteen years' existence at Millbank. It is not generally known that military psychiatry was established from 1711, when in the Royal Hospital at Kilmainham in Dublin "lunatic soldiers" were cared for over...
a period of 140 years. In 1819, following complaints of harsh treatment of soldiers in English mental hospitals, a military asylum was built at Fort Clarence near Chatham, and there humane management and occupational therapy were practised long before similar, but now historic, measures were introduced into the institutions of Lincoln and Hanwell. It was only in 1870 that the centre for Army Psychiatry was established in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, where “instruction in lunacy” became a recognized feature of the curriculum on Saturday mornings for surgeons on probation. Teaching in psychiatry was still given in D Block after the removal of the medical school to London in 1902. There are very close links between the Department of Army Psychiatry at the College and the Psychiatric Wing at Netley, where with improved accommodation, new insulin and research units and an active psychological department, there are adequate and fully recognized facilities for the training of State Registered Mental Nurses and preparation for the post-graduate Diploma in Psychological Medicine.

This Department has been founded on a long and creditable history of specialized service to the Army. During its short life it has already influenced many military activities. Its aims are to protect the mental well-being of the soldier and his family, and to make every medical officer more aware of his powers of social observation and human understanding.

READERS IN ARMY PSYCHIATRY

1946–1947 LIEUT.-COLONEL R. F. TREDGOLD.
1947–1948 LIEUT.-COLONEL E. H. LARKIN.

ASSISTANT PROFESSORS

1948–1952 LIEUT.-COLONEL L. C. F. CHEVENS.
1953–1956 LIEUT.-COLONEL J. F. D. MURPHY.
1956 LIEUT.-COLONEL J. MCGHIE.
1956–1957 LIEUT.-COLONEL H. POZNER.
1958–1960 LIEUT.-COLONEL J. MCGILLAN.
1960 LIEUT.-COLONEL H. POZNER.