

# WHO WAS AUBREY LEWIS?



Robert D Goldney AO, MD  
Emeritus Professor,  
Discipline of Psychiatry  
University of Adelaide

# Acknowledgements

University of Adelaide personnel:

Maureen Bell, Research Librarian

Cheryl Hoskin, Rare Books and Special Collections Librarian

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Obituaries/Biographies

Australian Dictionary of Biography

Michael Shepherd

Brian Barraclough

Edgar Jones

David Goldberg

Thomas Bewley

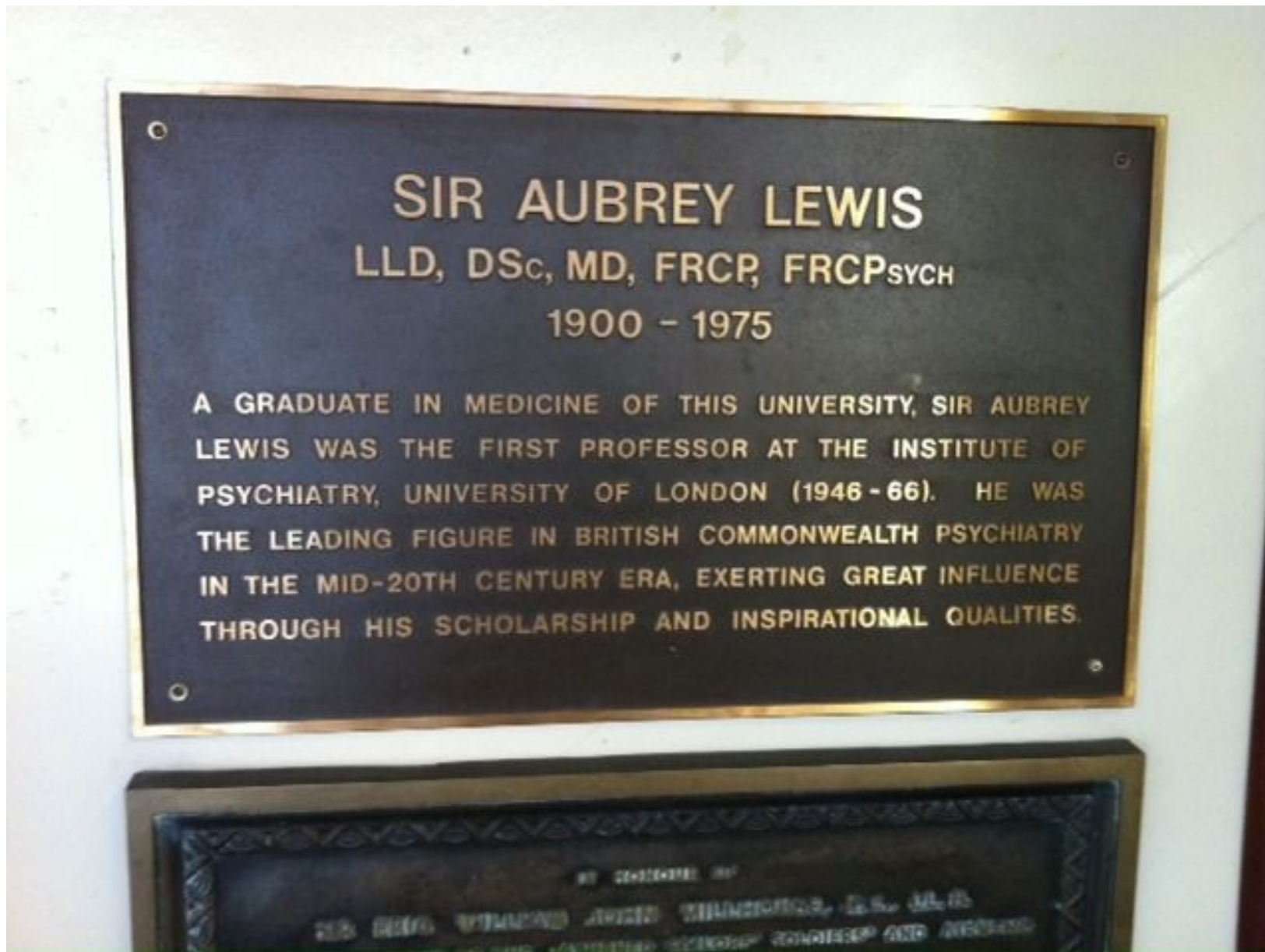
# “The man Adelaide forgot”

The Advertiser, 10/3/90

“Had Aubrey Lewis gone to St Peter’s College and been interested in field sports his name would probably be well known to generations of South Australians. But he was Jewish, went to a catholic school, his father was a nobody and he lived up the East end of Rundle St – definitely the wrong side of the tracks for a prejudicial, parochial Adelaide of the 1920’s”.



Foyer of Adelaide Medical school, 2016



**SIR AUBREY LEWIS**  
LLD, DSc, MD, FRCP, FRCPsych  
1900 - 1975

A GRADUATE IN MEDICINE OF THIS UNIVERSITY, SIR AUBREY LEWIS WAS THE FIRST PROFESSOR AT THE INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON (1946-66). HE WAS THE LEADING FIGURE IN BRITISH COMMONWEALTH PSYCHIATRY IN THE MID-20TH CENTURY ERA, EXERTING GREAT INFLUENCE THROUGH HIS SCHOLARSHIP AND INSPIRATIONAL QUALITIES.

Plaque presented 1981

# Aubrey Lewis

Born, Adelaide, 8 November 1900

Excelled at Christian Brothers College

Adelaide University Medical graduate 1923

Anthropological Research with Wood Jones, 1925

Rockefeller Foundation fellowship 1926/27

Maudsley Hospital London, 1928 – 1966

MRCP 1928 Fellow 1938

MD (Adelaide) 1931

Clinical Director, Maudsley, 1936

Chair of Psychiatry 1946

Knighted 1959 – first psychiatrist

Retired 1966

Died, London, 21 January 1975



## CBC Literary Society

“The judge specially complimented Master Aubrey Lewis, who, as an honorary member, made his first appearance, and, without notes of any kind, discussed Shakespeare and his works with agreeable delivery and wonderful fluency.”

Southern Cross, 28/4/11





CBC Literary Society, 1911. Aubrey Lewis front row far right

# Contributions to CBC Literary Society

1911 Shakespeare

1912 Dickens

1913 Maeterlinck (Belgian Philosopher)

1914 Bacon and Shakespeare authorship debate

1915 Origin and history of Philology

1916 Faust and Mephistopheles

1917 Vice President and presented with acknowledgement award

History, of all the branches of literature, is undoubtedly the most important; it acts as a spur to our endeavour, it points out to us the pitfalls which beset the way of the statesman, the man of letters, and the soldier, and teaches us how to avoid them; from it we learn how small, how infinitesimal is the space which we fill in the limitless expanse of the world's history; it is the signpost behind us which points to the future that is yet to come.

3/11

Aubrey wrote this undated essay while still at school, with remarkable confidence for someone who was at most 17. His literary style may have been modelled upon the authors he enjoyed, but even in his teens he demonstrated the elegant phrasing and formidable breadth of reading that was the hallmark of his many later articles (ref: IOP/PP3/1/1).

# Public Examinations

“Master Aubrey Julian Lewis, a brilliant student of the Christian Brothers College, who followed up his last year’s success in the Junior (first place in the State), by obtaining first place in the Senior this year, which entitles him to the 10 pound prize awarded by the Adelaide University. Master Lewis passed in eight subjects, gaining credits in French and German.”

Southern Cross, 8/1/15



# Secondary School Subjects

## **Senior**

1914: English Literature, Arithmetic and Algebra, Modern History, Geometry, French, Greek, Latin, German

## **Higher**

1915: German, Latin, Physics

1916: Biology, German, Latin, Physics

1917: German, Latin, Physics, Inorganic Chemistry, English Literature

Matriculation 10/5/18

## Medical School 1918 – 1923

1918	P I
1919	P II
1920	P III
1921	F
1922	F
1923	Supplementary PNC P II



AND ADDRESS Lewis, Aubrey John, Julian 2444 Rundle St.

Register No. 2951 REGISTER NO. 1576  
 Un. G. GRADE 4

COURSE B. Sc. DATE OF BIRTH 8/11/00 DATE OF MATRICULATION 10/5/18

Govt Bursary 1917.

SENIOR 1914 Eng. Lit. Arith & Alg. Mod. Hist. Geom. Jr. Gr. Lat. Gen.

Higher 1915. Gen. Lat. Physics. 1916. Biol. Gen. Lat. Physics. 1917. Gen. Lat. Physics. Inorg Chem. Eng. Lit.

STATUS GRANTED

YEAR	SUBJECT	RECEIPT	FIRST TERM	RECEIPT	SECOND TERM	RECEIPT	THIRD TERM	EXAMN.	RESULT	REMARKS
1916	Biology	B14812	2/21-	—	—	—	—	—	—	part
1918	First Year	9090136	10/10/.	9090158	10/10/.	9090185	10/10/.	%85 - 3/21.	N18 P I	Since 201-207 part 2/6 3/9 7/6
	Anat. Physiology									Lab 9090193 5/7
	Org. Physical Chem									↓
	Physiological Chem									
1919	Second Year	14203	5/57-	14253	5/57-	14340	5/57-	N200 200 3/31-	N19 P II	Since 201-207 part 2/6 3/9 7/6
	Anat. Physiol									Anal parts 2/4 7/6 7/6
	Mat Med.									Pharm 2/21-
1920	Third Year	14793	9/21-	14926	9-2-0	15009	9-2-0	15009 3-3-0	N20 P III	Since 201-6074
	Med Surg Path									13/131- 14926 Anal. P 3/9
	Bacter Reg Surg An									Part. 15009 3/9
	Preventive Medicine					15009	3-3-0			

NAME  
AND  
ADDRESS

Lewis Aubrey Julian <sup>M.D. 1938</sup> ~~M.D. 1935~~ (Bursary)  
1923

<sup>2424</sup>  
<sup>244</sup> Rundle St. City

YEAR	SUBJECT	RECEIPT	FIRST TERM	RECEIPT	SECOND TERM	RECEIPT	THIRD TERM	EXAMN.	RESULT	REMARKS
1921	Fourth Year Medicine Surgery Pathology Obstetrics Forensic Medicine	15201	8-15-0	12283	8-15-0	13451	8-15-0	12451 3-3-0	N21 F	9858 Insd. Hosp. fees. Paeon's Home (1530)
1922	Fourth Year O.R. Op. Surg. Therap.	14603	1-8-0 1-8-0	15575	1-8-0 1-8-0	16616	1-8-0 1-8-0	16961 2-5-0	N22 F	14603 Hosp. fees \$5.50
1923	Clinical Surgery Sixth Year N.R. Clin. med. Clin. Surg. Gynae. Forens. Med. Psych. Med. Ophth. Otol.	19849	10-0-0	19850	10-0-0	21963	10-0-0	17624 5-5-0	M23 PNC N23 PII	Supplementary Hosp. fees of 10-10-0 } 1924 Anesthetics 3-3-0 Children's Hosp. 1-0-0
<p>M. B. B. S. Degree conferred Dec 12<sup>th</sup> 1923.</p>										
1930	M.D. Thesis & Exam. (at Council Meeting)							53574 19/15		Approved on 7/1931 56485 10/19. Degree fee.
<p>Dec 70/1931. Admitted to M.D. degree without further exam. M.D. degree conferred June 26<sup>th</sup> 1931</p>										



# Adelaide University Magazine

August 1920

“Mr A J Lewis then read his paper on “Quacks”, which proved to be of the finest ever heard by the Medical Students Society. His quick touches of humour, quiet sarcasm, balanced judgement, and above all, the brilliant style in which it was written, only go to show how great has been Medicine’s gain, I hope this will not prove to be Literature’s loss.”

# AMSS Review

June 1920

Censor: Prof Wood Jones

Editor: Mr H.W. Florey

Assistant Ed: Mr A.J.Lewis

Lewis Editor from Oct 1921



Many changes have been recorded in the "Review" during the last few years, but there have been none which offered such tangible evidence of progress in our Medical School as those referred to in the secretary's report in this issue. Progress, of course, there has been during past years, much of it of the kind that is not readily appreciated because it is subtle and gradual, having nothing spectacular in its methods, nor immediately striking in its results. But when a big building is erected and the whole curriculum revised, we have little doubt of what we are witnessing, and we say to ourselves that here is a milestone on our school's road towards the ideal of medical education; here is the beginning of a new epoch in its history. All this is very true, no doubt, but buildings and curricula in themselves prove nothing; it is only in so far as they further the ends of instruction—helping the student to think clearly, to acquire knowledge, and to do both with as little difficulty as possible—that they can be regarded as signs of progress. A new curriculum might be the outcome of a restless desire for novelty; a new building might be nothing more than the means of providing room for an increasing number of students. But when the advance of knowledge and of technical methods in some fundamental sciences is such that any instruction given in the old laboratories must be incomplete, and research hampered; when it is recognised that defects in the existing curriculum make the work of the student harder and less profitable than it might be, then a course in which these defects are remedied to any extent, and a building in which there is adequate provision for teaching and research, are a very effective answer to any charge

“...when a big building is erected and the whole curriculum revised, we have little doubt of what we are witnessing, and we say to ourselves that here is a milestone on our school’s road towards the ideal of medical education; here is the beginning of a new epoch in its history. All this is very true, no doubt, ***but buildings and curricula in themselves prove nothing***; it is only in so far as they further the ends of instruction – helping the student to think clearly, to acquire knowledge, and to do both with as little difficulty as possible – that they can be regarded as signs of progress”.

Lewis, Editorial, July 1922



Prof Archibald Watson with students, 1919



Aubrey Lewis as Watson, probably on "prosh" day



Medical students graduating in 1923

Back row: JS Kessel, AW Welch, AJ Lewis

Middle row: RT Binns, FL Thyer, JR Cornish, AL Tostevin, FB Leditschke, GH Howard

Front row: WR Angus, FR Wicks, HMcl Burch, HC Hosking, DA Dowling, RJDeN Souter, LD Cowling

# Wood Jones expedition to Ooldea, 1926

University of Adelaide based Board for Anthropological Research



Campbell, T.D. Lewis, A.J. (1926)

The Aborigines of South Australia:

Anthropometric, descriptive and other observations  
recorded at Ooldea.

Trans, R. Soc. S. Aust. 50: 183-191.

“...workers need special training in  
research...”

# **JB Cleland's reference for Rockefeller Fellowship**

“Dr Lewis is the type of man who should prove entirely successful. He speaks and writes Latin fluently and French tolerably well, and he also commands German and Greek. As a student Lewis manifested tastes differing from those of the majority of his fellows in running along philosophical, literary and psychiatric lines.”



# Rockefeller Fellowship, 1926/7

“...for study in psychological medicine, nervous diseases, etc., with the special object of training the holder for studying the mental traits of the Australian aborigine”

Visited:	Boston	McFie Campbell
	Baltimore	Johns Hopkins with Adolf Meyer*
	Queen Square	Gordon Holmes
	Heidelberg	Karl Beringer and Meyer-Gross
	Berlin	Charite with Karl Bonhoeffer*

Lewis was particularly influenced by Adolf Meyer’s psycho-biological approach and Bonhoeffer’s concept of endogenous as opposed to exogenous reactions

## The late 1920s

- It is unclear whether Lewis returned to Australia in late 1927 (did so in 1931)
- It was made clear there were no academic positions available in Adelaide
- He obtained an extension to his Rockefeller Fellowship
- Further work at Queen Square and the Maudsley, including Sleep Research
- Gained MRCP in 1928
- Appointed to Maudsley staff in 1929

# Early work 1930's

- Depression/Melancholia  
Seminal papers
- Genetics/Eugenics  
Benefit of twin studies
- Statistics in psychiatry  
Correspondence with Fisher
- Rockefeller Foundation  
European psychiatric centres

# Lewis on Depression / Melancholia

- 1931 “A Clinical and Historical Survey of Depressive States Based on the study of sixty one cases” MD Thesis
- 1934 “Melancholia: a clinical survey of depressive states
- 1936 “Melancholia: Prognostic study and case material
- 1938 “States of depression: their clinical and aetiological differentiation

These papers have prompted continuing debate:

- eg:
- Kiloh & Garside 1977
  - Parker & Hadzi-Pavlovic 1993

# Rockefeller Foundation

- Founded 1913
- Mission: “Promoting the well-being of humanity throughout the world”
- Endowment in 2009: \$3.4 billion, with about \$140 million grants per year
- Helped establish:
  - London School of Hygiene and Tropical Health
  - Johns Hopkins School of Public Health
  - Harvard School of Public Health
  - School of Hygiene, University of Toronto
  - Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Brain Research
  - Peking Union Medical College
  - Campaigns: Yellow Fever, Hook Worm, Malaria
- Numerous smaller grants (including those to Lewis)
- Associated with 221 Nobel Laureates

# The Maudsley benefitted

- Decision in 1933 of the Rockefeller Foundation Trustees for “the plans of the Division of Medical Sciences to concentrate on Psychiatry”
- Sponsorship and support of German émigré scientists
- Direct yearly grants from 1933
- Lewis’s Fellowship

# Lewis's Rockefeller Fellowship 1937

The broad aim was to investigate the best scientific and clinical practices in Psychiatry with a view to their establishment and promotion in the UK

Trustees correspondence noted:

In the context of Meyer's "Psycho-biology"

Psychoanalysis could not be "accurately studied from a scientific viewpoint"

Pursuit of "real scientific studies"

# Lewis's Rockefeller Fellowship 1937

Visited European centres March to September, 1937

Holland, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Russia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark

45 cities and 234 individuals

It was to prove influential in both Lewis's subsequent work and also the direction of British (and, arguably world) psychiatry

Not published until 2003, in a Supplement of the journal "Medical History," probably because of the frankness of some of his observations



# Conclusions

- “outside the mainstream of medicine”
- “a rather stagnant subject”
- “flawed by conflicting results, weak technique, idea-less repetitive, excess of speculation or – probably most important of all – failure to see problems that are at once fruitful and attackable”
- ”the extravagance of some psychotherapists”

# World War II

Maudsley evacuated .... his family went to Canada

Clinical work moved to Mill Hill

Continuing emphasis on the value of statistics

Analysis and publication of results of interventions

“effort syndrome”

“annexure scheme” for service personnel

Other publications including:

Hitler’s mental state, 1940

The case of Rudolf Hess, 1945

1942 – Expert War Services Committee

1945 – Advisory Committee on Army Psychiatry



# 1940s to retirement

- Chair of Psychiatry with University of London, 1946
- Consolidation of Institute of Psychiatry with University
- Development of Academic DPM, the forerunner of the subsequent Royal College of Psychiatrists examination
- Establishment of different units at The Maudsley:

Social Psychiatry

Forensic Psychiatry

Genetics

Mental Handicap

Psychology

Neuro-psychiatry

Neurosurgery

Old Age Psychiatry

Substance abuse

Psychotherapy

# Other tasks

Interdepartmental Committee on Medical Schools, 1944

First Psychiatrist on UK University Grants Commission 1940s

Psychiatric adviser in establishment of NHS

Occupational Psychiatry Research Unit – 1948

First psychiatric member of UK Medical Research Council, 1952

WHO, Medical Research Committee, 1950s

One of 33 psychiatrists world wide founding members of CINP, 1958

Numerous invited lectures/Honorary degrees

# Other published contributions

Many unsigned Editorials in BMJ and Lancet

Book reviews in numerous Medical Journals, and:

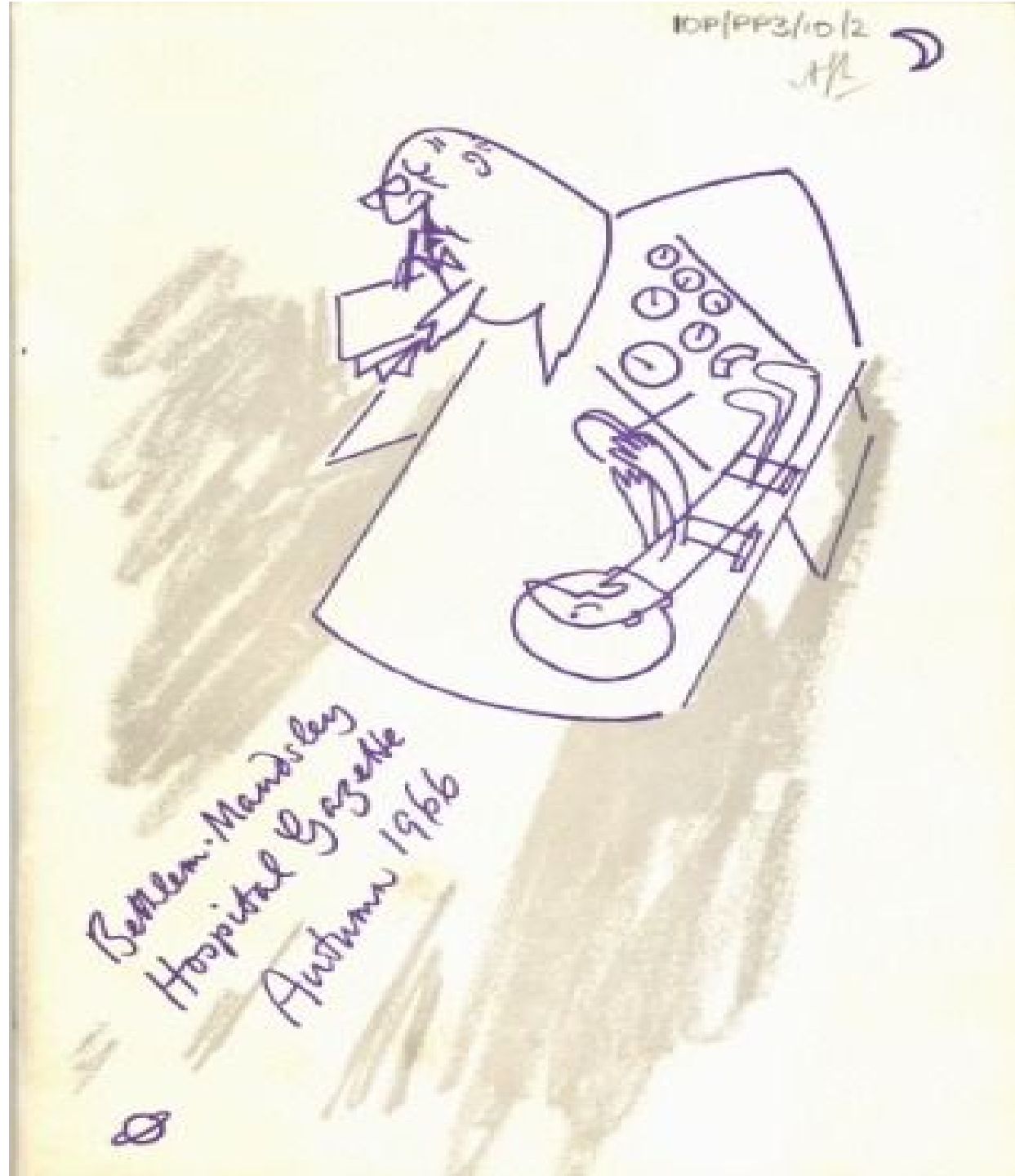
The Times Literary Supplement

New York Review of Books



Retirement presentation, 1966

Post-graduate students'  
send off





# Post “Retirement”

Many publications....the most seminal:

1967 “Melancholia: a historical review”

1967 “Problems presented by the ambiguous word “anxiety” ”

1970 “Paranoia and paranoid: a historical perspective”

1971 “Endogenous and exogenous: a useful dichotomy?”

1972 ““Psychogenic”: a word and its limitations”

1974 “Psychopathic personality: a most elusive category”

1975 “The survival of hysteria”

# Personal Life

M. 1934 to Hilda Stoessiger

4 children



Prior to Knighthood, 1959



Persuaded by children to sit astride a snow horse, 1947

# Dr Hilda Stoessiger, 1900-1966

Dr Stoessiger was a distinguished child psychiatrist

A centre was established in her memory in 1971



Lewis with Princess  
Alexandra at opening



Portrait of Lewis by his wife in late 1940s

# Personal attributes

J Escourt Hughes, 1981

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“... short in stature, of swarthy complexion and with exceptionally lively dark eyes, always seeming a little unusual, but not otherwise noticeable. He was what today is called a loner and did not make many friends”

“... All of us who were his fellow students recognized that he was a man of exceptional intellectual capacity.... “

“... He was not popular with the students because of his sarcasm, pedantry and his inability to tolerate their lack of knowledge ....”

” On the surgical side of his appointment he was never at home and he is remembered as fumbling over the slightest surgical procedure”

# Personal attributes

G A German, 1981

“His knowledge was encyclopaedic; and to increase one’s feelings of inferiority, extended over the literature in three or four different modern languages not to mention Greek and Latin .... His capacity to analyse and to pick the eyes out of an account, whether written or verbally delivered, was phenomenal and devastating .... He could cut through humbug and pretension, hypocrisy and illogic, with a skill which seemed both intuitive and magical”

# Personal attributes

“Although not a figure widely known to the public (indeed, Lewis shunned personal publicity), he commanded respect in other medical disciplines and among psychiatrists throughout the world. A formidable and sometimes intimidating figure, he had a passion for intellectual rigour and had little patience with imprecision or poorly thought-out ideas”

E Jones, 2002

“Once you had suffered the experience of presenting a case at one of his Monday morning conferences, no other public appearance, whether on radio, TV or the lecture platform, could hold any terrors for you”

A Storr, 2001

## A fitting summary

“He is the administrator with a mission – to create a great scientific institute – an educator of genius who imparts not the product but the art and craft of his science; he is already part of psychiatric history and something of a legend in his own time”

E J Anthony, 1969, “A man for all reasons”

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# Sir Aubrey Lewis, 1900-1975

