



**100 years of British Military  
Psychology (Myers to the MoD)  
Prof Jamie Hacker Hughes CPsychol  
FBPsS  
President (2015-16)  
British Psychological Society**

### Introduction

This article is based on a talk given to the COUPS (Cambridge Open University Psychology Society) Autumn Conference 2014. It is written from the perspective of a psychologist who was formerly Head of Clinical Psychology for the MoD, with a keen sense of the history of our profession, and who might describe himself as an enthusiastic amateur. The author studied at UCL, King's College London and Cambridge, all paths well-trodden by those whose stories follow below, later followed their paths by working for the Ministry of Defence for a number of years and is now, again, following in many of their footsteps as the British Psychological Society's 81<sup>st</sup> President. What follows is a (very brief) synopsis of the development of military psychology in the UK and its influence on the BPS, and psychology in general over the past 100 years, and the individual psychologists, their role(s) and contributions are described in turn.

### Charles Edward Spearman 1863-1945

The story begins with Charles Spearman (famous for Spearman's Rho, amongst many other things) who began his career

not as a psychologist but as a soldier, an engineer, 'or sapper'. As a young man of 22 he fought in the Burmese War of 1885-6 and by the time the Boer War broke out he had reached the rank of Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General. When the war ended, he resigned his commission in order to study psychology under Wilhelm Wundt at Leipzig University in Germany, the first experimental psychology department in the world and, later, taught psychology at London University. He joined the Army again at the outbreak of the First World War.

### Charles Samuel Myers CBE FRS 1873-1946

Charles Myers was born in South London and studied medicine at Cambridge and Bart's Hospital. As a young man, he went with McDougall, Rivers, Seligman and others on the Torres Straits (the islands lying in the seas between Australia and Papua New Guinea) expedition of 1898, described in Ben Shepard's book, 'Headhunters', and conducted musicological research amongst the islanders.



Rivers, Seligman & McDougall

After the beginning of the war, Myers volunteered to work in the Duchess of

Westminster's Field Hospital in Le Touquet, was commissioned into the Royal Army Medical Corps and was soon appointed Consultant Psychologist to the British Expeditionary Force, setting up a number of Forward Psychiatry (NYDN – Not Yet Diagnosed Neurological) Hospitals. He was famous for his 1915 Lancet paper, 'The Study of Shell Shock', but gradually fell from favour with the rise of the neurologists and returned to England to research hydrophones for submarine detection at HMS Crystal Palace.

Myers refused to participate in the 1922 Southborough Commission on Shell Shock, saying that the memories of his wartime experiences were too painful for him and, instead, founded the NIIP, the National Institute for Industrial Psychology. He served as the first President of the British Psychological Society between 1920-1923, having been a member of the BPS since its foundation in 1906, and having been Secretary of its predecessor, the Psychological Society (founded in 1901) in 1904. In 1940, he published 'Shell Shock in France', a ground breaking study of 2,000 cases of shell shock, where he was able to identify several cases which did not directly involve explosions and demonstrated that "shell shock" could be treated psychologically. At the beginning of World War Two, he advised the War Office on War Office Selection Boards (WOSBs) before his death in 1946.

### **William Halse Rivers Rivers, FRCP, FRS 1864-1922**

WHR Rivers was another English doctor, turned anthropologist, neurologist, ethnologist and psychiatrist, who took

part in the 1898 Torres Straits Exhibition, together with Myers, Seligman, McDougall and others, in this case carrying out anthropological and ethnological research.

Rivers studied at Cambridge and took part in nerve conduction experiments with the famous neurologist, Henry Head. He became the joint editor and founder of the British Journal of Psychology in 1903 and, in 1904, became Lecturer in Experimental Psychology at Cambridge University.

However, Rivers was probably best known for his work treating British Army officers suffering from shell shock in World War I at Salford Military Hospital, Craiglockhart, in Edinburgh (now the home of Edinburgh Napier University). His work treating the author Siegfried Sassoon and the poet Wilfred Owen (the first survived the war but the latter died in France the day before the Armistice) was described vividly in the Regeneration trilogy by the author Pat Barker, and in the accompanying film of the same name. Tragically, Rivers died in 1922 of a strangulated hernia.

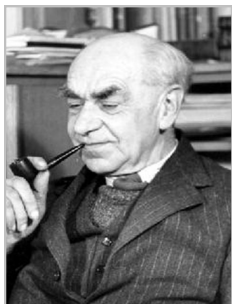
### **William McDougall FRS 1871 - 1939**

William McDougall began his studies at Owen's College, Manchester where he studied for a BSc, then going on to Cambridge where he gained, successively, a BA, MB, BChir and MA. He then went on to University College, London where he was one of the founder members of the BPS in 1906 and worked with Sully. At the beginning of World War One in 1914, McDougall drove an ambulance on the Western front, but he was soon commissioned into the RAMC as a Major to deal with cases of shell-shock.

After the War, in 1919, McDougall went to visit C. G. Jung at Zürich and was, for a time, also analysed by him. Later, he went to America to be Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, where he worked with the celebrated American psychologist, William James.

**Sir Frederic  
Charles Bartlett  
FRS 1886-1968**

Frederic Bartlett was the first professor of experimental psychology at the University of Cambridge. He later established the Applied



Psychology Unit (APU, now the Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit or CBSU) at Cambridge with Kenneth Craik and then succeeded Craik as Director in 1945.

**Philip Vernon 1905 - 1987**

Philip Vernon was recruited by Alec Rodger (see below), worked with Royal Navy HMS Osprey on submarine detection (SD) and Asdic (Anti-Submarine Detector Equipment) selection during the Second World War. Having not been offered the post of Senior Principal Psychologist (SP) in succession to Alec Rodger in 1947 he became Professor of Psychology at the Institute of Education in London and then went on to be Professor of Psychology and Head of Department at University of Calgary, in Canada.

**Alec Rodger 1907 – 1982**

Alec Rodger was Reader in Psychology and then Professor of Occupational

Psychology at Birkbeck College, University of London. He served as Senior Principal Psychologist to the Royal Navy between 1940 and 1947. He was described by the Second Lord of the Admiralty, Admiral Sir Algernon Willis, thus: "...the Senior Psychologist and his happy band who, out of the limelight, have done very valuable work for the Navy in putting round pegs into square holes, and in helping to modernise our hopelessly archaic methods of selecting officers and men into the various branches of the Navy". Rodger later became the BPS' Honorary General Secretary between 1957 and 1958.

**John Carlyle Raven 1902 – 1970**

JC Raven (as he was known) came to King's College London in 1939 to study psychology under the celebrated Charles Spearman aged 36. When war was declared toward the end of that year he joined the Mill Hill Emergency Hospital. As a result of his contacts, he was able to initiate research into the ability of his test to predict success in army training courses, and this has gone down in history as the first large-scale psychological research project ever undertaken by the British army.

These studies led to the adoption of his (Raven's) Progressive Matrices as the first standard psychological test given to all recruits to the army. A derivative, which later formed the basis of the Advanced Progressive Matrices (APM), was prepared for use in the War Office Officer Selection Boards (WOSB'). It was the validation of the APM that provided the basis for the claim, subsequently publicised by Raven's colleague at Mill Hill, Hans Eysenck, that a single psychological test could provide as much information as complex Assessment

Centre procedures. Raven moved to the Crichton Royal to establish the first ever civilian hospital psychology department in 1944 and from there came the beginnings of the first Clinical Psychology training course in the United Kingdom.

### **Alan Clarke 1922-2011**

Alan Clark saw wartime service in the Royal Signals (the communications and telecommunications branch of the Army) and faked messages to deceive the Germans at the time of the landings on D Day. After the war, he went to Manor Park Hospital, Epsom where he was responsible for the important book, "Mental Deficiency: The Changing Outlook". Clark later became the first Professor of Psychology at Hull University, BPS President and was also, for a time, editor of the British Journal of Psychology.

### **John Graham-White 1913 – 2008.**

John Graham-White worked throughout the Second World War on aptitude assessment and shell-shock, battle neuroses with, the later discredited, Sir Cyril Burt, and subsequently met and worked with Mowrer (of 2-stage conditioning) in Harvard. He also worked for a while with the Canadian Forces Intelligence Corps in Germany. After the war ended, he was appointed to the first ever clinical psychologist post at Alder Hey hospital in Liverpool and then to the first clinical psychologist in Northern Ireland.

### **Monte Bernard Shapiro 1912 – 2000**

Monte Shapiro came to the United Kingdom from South Africa to study at Cambridge University with Oliver Zangwill. He volunteered for aircrew

duties as a navigator/bomb aimer but was shot down over the Netherlands, injuring his arm. After the war, he worked with Eysenck at Maudsley and established the clinical psychology training course and a clinical psychology service at the Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals in London. He was known for his work on early single case-studies and in early neuropsychology and the M B Shapiro Award is named after him. Despite working for over a quarter of a century at the Maudsley, Shapiro was never awarded the professorship which should rightfully have been his.

### **Herbert Phillipson 1911 – 1992**

Herbert Phillipson was initially commissioned into the Royal Artillery Coastal Defence Unit but was seconded onto work on WOSBs with Wilfred Bion, John Rickman, Henry Murray (of Thematic Apperception Test – TAT fame) and colleagues. (Ronald Adam, Adjutant General). He worked at Northfield (the site of the noted Northfield Experiment) and the Tavistock Clinic with Bion and Foulkes. Phillipson was yet another pioneer of clinical psychology and was, among other things, the creator of the Object Relations Test. He was appointed as Senior Psychologist at the Tavistock in 1945

### **May Davidson 1914 – 1982**

May Davidson was born in South Africa and came to UCL in 1938. During the War, she worked as an Experimental Officer in the Operational Research Unit of



the Admiralty (under Alec Rodger). Later, she moved to clinical from educational psychology with the creation of the NHS by the Trethowan Committee. She was Chair of the BPS' Professional Affairs Board (PAB, the forerunner of the present Professional Practice Board or PPB) from 1974 to 1977 and again from 1979 to 1981 and was BPS President from 1976-1977. She was awarded the CBE 1980 and was responsible for most of the current organisation of the BPS. The May Davidson Award, an early career award for clinical psychologists, is named after her.

### **H Gwynne Jones 1918 – 1985**

Gwynne Jones was a former Fleet Air Arm pilot 1940 to 1945 who went on to be President of the BPS, the British Association for Behavioural Psychotherapy (BABP, now the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies, BABCP) and BSECH (the British Society for Experimental and Clinical Hypnosis (now BSCAH), the British Society for Clinical and Academic Hypnosis).

### **Donald Eric Broadbent 1926 – 1993**

After travelling to the United States and learning to fly, Donald Broadbent gained a ground job in personnel selection with the RAF. After the war, in 1947, he went to Cambridge under Sir Frederick Bartlett to study Psychology and then on to Craik's to Applied Psychology Unit where he worked on a Royal Navy funded project to investigate the effect of noise on performance which led to his discovery of selective attention through the dichotic listening task. He subsequently became the APU's Director from 1958 to 1974 and in 1991 the BPS' Broadbent Lecture was instituted.

### **Oliver Zangwill FRS**

#### **1913 – 1987**

Oliver Zangwill studied at UCL and King's College Cambridge and was Professor of Experimental Psychology at Cambridge for 30 years. He was one of the founding fathers of neuropsychology, was active in BPS and was the Founder of the Experimental Psychology Society (EPS).



### **Freda Gladys Newcombe 1925 – 2001**

Freda Newcombe was a British clinical neuropsychologist who studied at Manchester University, the Institute of Psychiatry and Linacre College Oxford in 1963 under Professor Charles Ritchie Russell undertaking a doctoral research project on the effects of brain injuries through shrapnel wounds on British servicemen in World War Two. She was awarded her DPhil 1966, later published as a book in 1969: 'Missile wounds of the brain: a study of psychological deficits'.

### **Recent History**

The many other clinical psychologists who have served in the MoD include Anna Marley, Rod Holland, Ian Robbins, Stan Renwick and the MoD's current Defence Consultant Advisor in Clinical Psychology, Rachel Norris. The MoD's current clinical service employs clinical, counselling, forensic, neuro- and health psychologists and the MoD also has an educational psychology service. Dr Norris' predecessor in the role, the author, has now followed in the footsteps of many above (10% of the Presidents of

the BPS have been military psychologists) by becoming the 81<sup>st</sup> BPS President and, under his tenure as Head of Clinical Psychology for the MoD, an uniformed clinical psychology role was introduced in the Army. Occupational psychologists are also employed in all three branches of the Services, as well as in MoD centrally, and in the MoD's research establishments.

Military psychology has made a huge contribution to the development of psychology as a discipline in this country throughout the present century and the last. It is fitting that, in the centenary year of Myers' commissioning as the first British psychologist that a Military, or Defence and Security, Psychology Section is now, at long last, in the process of formation in the British Psychological Society.

Jamie Hacker Hughes 2015

*Professor Jamie Hacker Hughes, current President of the British Psychological Society, is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Psychotherapist and Clinical Neuropsychologist and is currently Visiting Professor of Military Psychological Therapies at Anglia Ruskin University, Visiting Professor of Psychology at the University of Hertfordshire and Director of the Veterans and Families Institute at Anglia Ruskin University.*



Prof Jamie Hacker Hughes

COUPS conference 2014