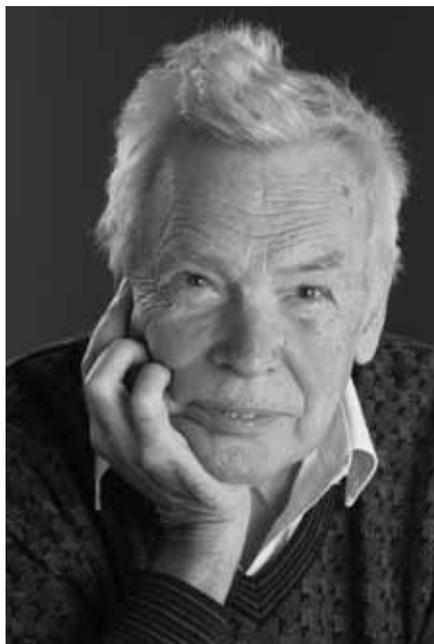


Professor Griffith Edwards

1928-2012



There's a telling scene recounted in Horace Freeland Judson's book *Heroin Addiction in Britain*, which explores the British drug treatment landscape of the early 1970s. Judson was bothered by the punitive response to the drug problem adopted by his US homeland and had come to Britain to explore and document its more medical approach. Judson describes a conversation with Griffith Edwards, "over an institutional lunch – a pale, English institutional lunch of poached fresh fish fillets, broad beans, and stewed gooseberries with custard sauce". By this time Griffith was already a leading NHS psychiatrist treating addiction problems, was director of the Addiction Research Unit (ARU) at the Maudsley Hospital and Institute of Psychiatry in south London, and was also an expert scientific adviser and all-round expert guide to addiction. Judson reports Griffith saying "One wonders how far the differences between the British and American drug problems are really the consequences of social policies.... The relation between a drug and a community can be very unstable – our problem with heroin, barbiturates, and amphetamines may, possibly, be unstable right now. But take the British and alcohol, or India and cannabis – sometimes the relationship is not at all easy to change." Such insights demonstrated that, despite the medical core of his profession and the lofty position in addiction psychiatry he enjoyed, Griffith put the individual experience of alcohol and drug problems and their impact on the community at the heart of his work. For Griffith, science needed to be connected to policy and contribute to the public good.

Griffith's work flourished at a time when addiction was still a very young science and a subject surrounded by ignorance and stigma. Unhindered by the constraints of the current academic world with its research metrics and h-indexes, Griffith nurtured an imaginative range of studies at the ARU undertaken by young researchers who themselves went on to become leading lights in their own right. However, working with Griffith Edwards was not only inspiring but was also challenging. He was intensely encouraging and

supportive, such was the range of topics explored by Griffith and his group that a leading contemporary researcher has remarked that most addiction research topics today already have "Griff's fingerprints on them."

But the encouragement was also challenging and demanding. How might the good idea be made better? How might it be viewed from a different standpoint? For many of today's leading figures in the addictions field, it was their time in the crucible of Griffith's unit which made them grow taller, made them look further, and made them see in 3-D. The criticism alongside the encouragement may have hurt at the time (and for some, it may ache still) but it unquestionably raised the bar and was a key influence on the emergence of stronger science-policy-practice relationships.

Griffith made a further profound contribution to developing the quality of addiction science by his editorship from 1978 to 2005 of the *British Journal of Addiction*, over which period he transformed an interesting but quirky house journal of the British addiction field into the leading international addiction journal of today. The journal is now called *Addiction* and is not only the leading journal in our field, but is also truly international, with a networked editorial office around the world and an international contributor and readership base. Griffith harnessed the power of this invisible college of leading colleagues to drive the inter-disciplinary international initiatives that produced influential state-of-the-art books which brought quality science to the policy, public and practitioner communities – *Alcohol Policy and the Public Good*, *Alcohol: no ordinary commodity* and *Drug Policy and the Public Good* to choose some classic examples. And his book for the practicing clinician, *The Treatment of Drinking Problems*, remains a classic today and is now in its fifth edition.

New framing or insights from Griffith Edwards have often had profound influence over the longer term. Back in 1976 Griffith, with the US psychiatrist Milton Gross, published a paper in the *British Medical Journal* that established the concept of alcohol dependence, a

concept that moved the idea of alcohol dependence away from a narrow view of an inescapable condition that could only be identified by the presence of physical withdrawal symptoms to one that took in a range of behaviours that marked an individual's inability to stop alcohol and/or other drugs becoming a central part of their lives. This new concept entered the psychiatric diagnostic bibles of the World Health Organisation's *International Classification of Diseases* and the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* and enabled a move away from strictly medical approaches to dependence to more evidence-based approaches that took into account all the aspects of the alcohol dependent's life and world.

Griffith himself helped to move treatment away from the clinic to the community through his support for the founding of community projects such as Phoenix House, the Community Drug Project and the Alcohol Recovery Project in South London which went on to become important pathfinders in the voluntary field.

Griffith will be remembered for his scholarship, having produced nearly 200 research papers and 40 books and for his advocacy and policy influence. But he will also be remembered for being as happy to share his enthusiasm for Beethoven's late string quartets with a passing colleague as arguing the finer points of defining dependence. Judson described Griffith as "that old-fashioned delight, a physician with a scholar's sense of the history of his subject", a description that many of Griffith's colleagues and friends would recognise. Griffith always had his eye to the future and took great delight in his later years in chatting to PhD students and leading student seminars. Not only was this refreshing for Griffith but, through this, the fruits of his life's work would be carried on, by the many of us whose lives and careers and interests were so profoundly touched by this colleague, mentor and friend.

■ **Professor John Strang**, National Addiction Centre, London

Work Programme consultation

DrugScope is gathering evidence for the Work & Pensions Select Committee inquiry into the DWP Work Programme.

The Work Programme was launched in mid-2011 and is one of the means by which the Department for Work and Pensions aims to support the long-term unemployed into paid work; the Work and Pensions Select Committee will shortly be holding an inquiry into the performance of the Programme for different customer groups. DrugScope is keen to hear from any agency working with people who are on the Programme – the deadline for submissions is 7th December 2012.

Please contact Paul Anders for more information.
paul.anders@drugscope.org.uk <http://tiny.cc/workprogramme>

New Minister addresses DrugScope conference

Anna Soubry, the new Public Health Minister, gave the keynote speech at the recent DrugScope conference held in London on 6th November. She informed delegates of her first hand knowledge of those with drug problems gained during her time as a criminal defence barrister. She told a packed audience how moved she was to see clients shaking a judge's hand after successfully completing treatment. She acknowledged the concerns that the sector had expressed about the changing landscape while expressing optimism about Payment by Results. She was challenged to speak to frontline drugs workers and services users rather than rely on the word of those running the PBR pilots and this she said she would do.

To view the conference presentations and picture gallery go to:
<http://www.drugscope.org.uk/events/drugscopeevents>

Communication team changes

Our communications manager Ruth Goldsmith is now on maternity leave. In her place is David Ader, previously a DrugScope intern. His email is davida@drugscope.org.uk and his direct line is 0207 234 9737.