

## COLLEGE PERSONALITIES

### Mrs Joan Mant

"HOW do I convert to A4 records?" "Can you tell me about F-Books? Problem orientated records? Washable carpet squares for my surgery?"

These and many hundreds of other questions would be answered by Mrs Joan Mant, either over the 'phone, or at visits to the Practice Organisation Room. While the knowledge and services so built up will continue, Mrs Mant has retired from her work with the College.

When in 1976 a working party was set up to investigate the need for and, if possible, the practicalities of a general information service for general practitioners, it produced a blueprint of the now flourishing Central Information Service, which stipulated a part-time general practitioner executive director, an administrative executive officer and a typist. In the event it was found that by appointing Mrs Joan Mant to the post of executive officer (in addition to all her other College duties), she and a part-time typist could and did develop what today promises to be one of the success stories of 14 Princes Gate. How could Joan Mant cope with this huge task? Her long apprenticeship to general practice, in particular the research side, started 28 years ago when Dr Ian Watson needed help in his dispensing country practice at Peaslake, and installed Mrs Mant as a part-time secretary/receptionist. Ian had by then, of course, developed the ideas which helped to form the RCGP Epidemic Observation Unit. Mrs Mant soon found herself as the centre of a worldwide web of general practitioners.

When the RCGP needed part-time secretarial help at headquarters, then still in Cadogan Gardens, Mrs Mant became the committee clerk for the Research Committee and later for the Practice Organisation Committee. Whilst the membership of these College committees kept changing, Mrs Joan Mant became drawn into the College work more and more, becoming the stable focus for many of our successful activities. Soon after the move into the present headquarters she became a full-time committee clerk.

During the early 1960s the Practice Organization Committee built up a considerable amount of detailed information on the organization and housing of general practice, which finally culminated in the Design Guide. In this way Mrs Mant gained the experience which later on led to her brilliant handling of the development of the Central Information Service.

To have worked for the College for 28 years is in itself an achievement; that during these years Joan established herself as the central focus of so many College activities comes as no surprise to all of us who have worked with her. Her silence when committees or working parties skidded into abortive ruts, her enthusiastic note-taking when the same struck an enterprising or promising fresh trail, was noticeable to the few who are privileged to know her well. Her heartfelt and most constructive and well thought-out criticism could only have been motivated by her thorough knowledge and love of general practice and what the College stood for. Her influence among the increasing staff at Princes Gate was that of a wise counsellor, who certainly did not shirk the unpleasant tasks of sorting out problems at any level, but whose good humour was proverbial.

It was with amazement that one realized that Joan Mant had to be up and about to travel into London long before



Mrs Joan Mant in the Practice Organization Room at Princes Gate

most of us stir into consciousness. She was always the first every morning, facing with equanimity the long journey back in the evening. Possibly these daily three hours and more of travelling paid one dividend when, in 1978, she graduated with a BA from the Open University.

There is another side to her. When in 1974 the European General Practice Research Workshop got into its stride, Mrs Mant became the meetings secretary for this very individual and at times temperamental group of European general practitioners from eleven countries. Her personality and balancing wisdom did much to keep this amorphous group together, and the twice-yearly international meetings in different European countries were distinctly Mrs Mant's achievement.

At 62, Mrs Mant is retiring from all this activity. We wish her a most tranquil retirement with her husband and family, but general practice will be the poorer for not hearing Joan address a postgraduate general practitioner course on organization, and quietly but nevertheless most effectively pointing to the road which is best for the patient.

E. V. KUENSSBERG