

## Sir Arthur Vernon Macan

**Born:** 1843  
**President:** 1902-1904  
**Died:** 1908

Arthur Vernon Macan was born on Monday 30 January 1843 at 9 Mountjoy Square, Dublin, one of the most stylish residential areas of the city at the time. Arthur was the eldest of three sons in a family of five. His father, John Macan, from a County Sligo family, attended Trinity College. In time, he became Queen's Counsel on the Circuit in Connaught, and then later the first Commissioner in the bankruptcy division of the High Court of Justice in Ireland. Arthur's mother was Maria Perrin of Huguenot extraction and the daughter of a Liverpool merchant.

Arthur Macan was educated at the recently founded St Columba's College overlooking Dublin Bay. At the age of 16 he became a scholar at Trinity College and graduated BA in December 1864. His medical studies were undertaken at the School of Physic, Trinity College, and at the House of Industry Hospital with its sites north and south of the Liffey. He proceeded MB and MCh in 1868. After graduation, Arthur studied obstetrics and gynaecology in Vienna and Berlin with the illustrious Carl Braun, Ferdinand von Hebra and Carl von Rokitansky of Vienna and the German surgeon Bernhard Von Langenbeck, each of whom would have a major influence on his subsequent midwifery career, particularly in the management of puerperal sepsis. During this three-year spell abroad Macan indulged in his passion for fitness and went on a walking tour from Berlin to Milan and on to Venice. Another such adventure brought him through Greece to Constantinople. An interest in military medicine and surgery led him to work as a volunteer in the Prussian Army hospital at Versailles during the Franco-Prussian conflict of 1870-71.

On returning to Ireland Macan practiced gynaecology at the City of Dublin Hospital. In 1877, he married Mary Agnes Wanklyn, the second daughter of John Wanklyn of Cheam, Surrey, and in the same year he obtained his Masters in Obstetrics degree and was elected Fellow of the College. In the following year, he was appointed Lecturer in Midwifery to the Carmichael School of Medicine and established his private practice in Lower Baggot Street. Macan was appointed Master of the Rotunda Lying-In Hospital in 1882 at a time when the existence of such an institution was questioned due to the high mortality and morbidity rates of puerperal sepsis. A reformer by nature, Macan championed the Listerian principles of anti-sepsis in midwifery, refined the improvements instituted by his predecessor Lombe Atthill (qv) and further developed the system of nursing. In the final eighteen months of his seven-year tenure as Master there were no deaths related to sepsis at the Rotunda. In his last year at the Rotunda he reported the first successful case of caesarean section in Ireland. Just before his term expired he was elected King's Professor of Midwifery at Trinity College with clinical duties in obstetrics and gynaecology at Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital.



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# LIVES OF THE PRESIDENTS

Macan was President of the College from 1902 to 1904, being knighted during his term of office in 1903. Among many achievements he also served as President of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland section of obstetrics (1886–7, 1899–1901); also of the obstetric section of the British Medical Association in 1887 and of the British Gynæcological Society (1890); he was also Honorary President of the obstetric section of the International Congress of Medicine in Berlin in 1890; and President of the Congress of Gynaecology and Obstetrics in Geneva in 1896; and in Amsterdam in 1899. Amidst his busy academic and clinical lives, he found time to publish seventy reports and communications in the Dublin Journal of Medical Science between 1872 and 1908, while many others appeared elsewhere.

Macan died of heart failure on 26 September 1908 at his residence, 53 Merrion Square, and his funeral took place three days later at Mount Jerome cemetery. There were three sons and four daughters of his marriage to Mary, who pre-deceased him in 1886. Her death was due to puerperal sepsis, a disease which few had done more to combat than her grieving husband Arthur Macan.

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