

## Ephraim MacDowel Cosgrave

**Born:** 1853  
**President:** 1914-1916  
**Died:** 1925

Ephraim MacDowel Cosgrave was born on 17 July 1853 to William Alexander Cosgrave of Corrstown House, County Dublin, clerk of the peace for County Longford, and his wife, Anna Maria, daughter of Ephraim MacDowel (1798–1835) who had been a surgeon at the Richmond Hospital, Dublin.

Cosgrave attended Trinity College Dublin where he graduated 'Stipendis Condonatis' in 1878, having achieved first place in both medicine and surgery. He was Physician to Drumcondra Hospital, Simpson's Hospital and Cork Street Fever Hospital; and was also Professor of Biology at the RCPI, of which he became a Fellow in 1887 and later President from 1914 to 1916. During the First World War, he founded the Dublin Castle Red Cross Hospital and was chairman of the Irish medical war committee. He was a Knight and honorary associate of the Order of Hospitals of St John of Jerusalem in England, and a lecturer and examiner for the St John Ambulance Association. The handbook he published for the Association, *Hints and helps for home nursing and hygiene*, sold almost 400,000 copies over the years. Indeed, his portrait at the RCPI shows him in the regalia of the President of the College and with the Insignia of a Knight of the Order of St John of Jerusalem.

Cosgrave was a man of many parts aside from his professional career - a member of the Royal Society of Antiquaries in Ireland, Treasurer of the Royal Zoological Society of Ireland, a founder and Secretary of the Georgian Society of Dublin (1909), a member of the Royal Irish Academy (1918), and President of the Dublin Amateur Photographic Society. As a member of the Dublin Chess Club, he was the first person in Ireland to play chess with living men as pieces. His publications are indicative of the breadth of his interests: *The Student's Botany* (1885); *Photography and architecture* (1896); *The Dictionary of Dublin* (1895; 2nd ed., 1906); *Experimental proofs of the role of alcohol* (1901); *Dublin and Co. Dublin in the twentieth century* (1908); *Visitor's guide to Dublin* (1907) and *Guide to the Zoological Gardens, Phoenix Park* (1914). He also edited a monthly journal, *Common Sense* (1893–1901), and was a collector of bookplates and engravings as well as books.



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Cosgrave died at his home at 5 Gardiner Row, Dublin on 16 February 1925, predeceased by his wife, Anna, in 1920. Anna, daughter of the Rev. William Crofts Bullen of Mallow, County Cork, was author of *Life studies in palmistry* (1899), and of papers on poor-law reform.

*The Lancet* on 28 February 1925 recorded his death as being due to a 'slight cerebral haemorrhage'.<sup>1</sup> His obituary in the *BMJ* on 7 March 1925 described him as being 'a prominent figure in the professional and social life of Dublin. His educational and professional attainments gained him many distinctions, while his charming personality and generous disposition won him many friends'.<sup>2</sup>

*The Irish Times* on 24 February 1925 reported on his memorial service noting that 'a muffled peal was rung on the bells before the service by the amateur change ringers, of whom Dr Cosgrave had been a member for many years'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Ephraim MacDowel Cosgrave', *The Lancet*, 23 February 1925.

<sup>2</sup> 'E MacDowel Cosgrave, MD', *British Medical Journal*, 7 March 1925.

<sup>3</sup> 'The late Dr Cosgrave', *The Irish Times*, 24 February 1925.

