

Sir Edward Barry

Born: 1698
President: 1749-1750
Died: 1776

Sir Edward Barry, physician and MP, was born in Cork city second son of the seven children of Edward Barry MD and his wife, Jane, also of Cork. He graduated BA at Trinity College Dublin in 1717, having been admitted at the age of 15. In 1717, he 'entered the Physic line' at Leyden and studied under the famous Dutch physician Hermann Boerhaave. His graduation thesis was entitled, *Dissertatio Medica Inauguralis de Nutritione* and he graduated MD in 1718.

He returned to Ireland to practice medicine at Orrery Quay, Cork and in 1726 he wrote a treatise *On a consumption of the lungs* and contributed to the Edinburgh Medical Essays. One of the concepts he pioneered was the puncturing of tuberculous cavities to allow them to heal. He was made a Freeman of Cork on 6 July 1731 and, in 1732, was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. He moved to Dublin in 1739, graduated MD at Trinity College in 1740, the same year that he was admitted a Fellow of the College of Physicians. He was elected President of the College in 1749.

In April 1744, he was a founder of the Physico-Historical Society of Ireland, established to inquire into 'the ancient and present state' of Ireland, and he became one of its most active members and Vice-President; he was also a member of its offshoot, the Medico-Philosophical Society. He held many positions, including Physician General to the forces in Ireland (1745–76), Regius Professor of Physic at Trinity College (1754), Governor of the Foundling Hospital and Workhouse (1769–76), Commissioner of James's Street Infirmary (1760–73), and Governor of St Patrick's Hospital (1743, 1769). He resided on College Green, and in 1751 commissioned the building of Mespil House, one of Dublin's finest Georgian houses.

Elected to the Irish House of Commons for Charleville, County Cork (1744–60), he often voted independently despite holding several government positions. He resigned in 1760 and was succeeded by his son Robert, a barrister, when the next parliament was established. He resigned his professorship at Trinity College and the Fellowship of the College of Physicians and left Ireland in the late 1750s, possibly over a dispute concerning the conferral of a degree on Sir Fielding Ould, Master of the Rotunda Hospital. Incorporated MD at Oxford on 20 November 1759, he practised in London and became Physician to the Holland family. In 1759 Lady Caroline Fox praised Barry's abilities and claimed that he had a great reputation in London. Samuel Johnson, on the other hand, observed that he 'brought his reputation with him but had not great success'.¹

¹ James Boswell, *The life of Samuel Johnson* (London: Charles Dilly, 1791) volume ii, 23



LIVES OF THE PRESIDENTS

He became a Fellow of the College of Physicians of London (1761) and a Censor of the College (1763). He bought the estate of Dundeedy, near Macroom, County Cork, and was created a baronet on 1 August 1775.

About 1770 he left London and settled in Bath, Somerset, where he died in March 1776. A portrait of Barry, attributed to Sir Joshua Reynolds, is held in Trinity College. He married first in 1725 a woman whose name is unknown and who died in childbirth in 1741 having borne him four sons and two daughters. His second marriage, in 1746, to Jane Dopping yielded no children. Jane was the daughter of Anthony Dopping (1695–1743), Bishop of Ossory.

Barry was succeeded to the baronetcy by his eldest son, Nathaniel (qv), who had joined him as State Physician (1749–85). Nathaniel was a distinguished physician, Professor of Chirurgery and Midwifery at Trinity College, and President of the College of Physicians.

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