

Constantine Barbor

Born: 1714
President 1754-55, 1764-65, 1769 -70
Died: 1783

Constantine Barbor (variant of Barber) was born in Dublin in 1714. His father was a wool clothier or tailor living in Capel Street, Dublin. His mother was Mary Barber, poetess and friend of Jonathan Swift. She began writing poetry for the purpose of enlivening her children's lessons and subsequently published several books of poetry. Saphira was the poetic name given to Mrs Barber at the Deanery. Constantine's brother was Robert Barber, a well-known miniature painter and engraver.

Barbor entered Trinity College in 1729 and was elected a scholar in 1732. Two years later he graduated BA. He had graduated MD at Leiden in 1730 and then passed the examination for the degree of MB in 1741 and MD in 1742 at the College of Physicians. In February 1743 he was admitted a Candidate of the College of Physicians and elected a Fellow in May 1747. He was elected President on three occasions in 1754, 1764 and 1769 and was made an Honorary Fellow on Saint Luke's Day 1782.

In April 1755, Barbor was unanimously elected Physician of the Blue Coat Hospital in place of the late Dr Weld. In 1671, a charitable school for boys of poor families was established, called the Hospital and Free School of King Charles II, Dublin, which became known as the King's Hospital or Blue Coat School because of the boys' military-style blue uniform. Barbor also served as a governor of Dr Steevens' Hospital.

In 1749 Barbor had been elected King's Professor of Materia Medica and Pharmacy and remained in post until 1782. Sir Patrick Dun at his death in 1713 had left his large estate and considerable financial investments in trust to be used by the College to establish a professorship of Medicine and a medical school. The King's Professors which were established by the trust fund were appointed by the College but would teach in the School of Physic in Trinity College. The first appointees had to work without remuneration until the death of Lady Dun. The new professorships were closed to Catholics, reflecting the anti-Jacobite feelings of the period. None of the three candidates for the professorships had any expertise in their speciality but all were



graduates of the University of Dublin. The Professors were required to lecture on their subjects in Latin on three afternoons each week in Trinity College. The emolument for each chair was expected to be £90 per year, with the likelihood of an increase.

Barbor's three terms as President were uneventful with no major events that impacted on the College. Minutes of meetings regularly recorded fines imposed on Fellows for their absence and excuses were noted for indisposition or absence in the country. At that time, there was a maximum of twelve Fellows at any time; no College meeting was held on 30 October 1769 on account of the absence of six specified members.

The Medical Register for 1783 records Barbor as being the Physician in charge of the New Hospital for Incurables on Lazer's Hill 'which at present admits forty-two patients, who are maintained and furnished with clothes and other accessories at the expense of this charity. Constables and others receive a reward of half a guinea, every time they bring to this house persons who are found exposing their deformities in the streets'.¹

A letter from a Mrs Ann Fisher, daughter of a deceased Fellow, 'praying relief in her distressed circumstances' was read at a meeting in 1769 and it was ordered that the Treasurer pay her £30. Meetings were either solemn meetings or public meetings; many of the degree examinations were held at public meetings.

In June 1770 'it was ordered that the charter of the college be copied and laid before the attorney general for his opinion on the following issue; whether the college have by their charter the power to license to persons professing the Roman Catholic religion to practice Physick'. It was also ordered that the Treasurer pay the President any expense that might arise from getting the opinion.²

In a poem descriptive of the medical faculty in Dublin, published by John Gilborne MD in 1775, the following lines are devoted to Professor Barbor;

Wise Barbor can prolong the Days of Youth,
By Maxims founded on undoubted Truth
With pharmaceutic Art he plainly shews
How to prepare, preserve, compound, and choose

¹ *The Medical Register for the year 1783* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1783)

² *College Journal* - Vol. III (RCPI/2/1/1/3)



Drugs, and Materials Medical, that will
All Indications curative fulfil.³

Constantine Barbor married Rebecca Hyde of Newtown, King's County, in 1742. He died on 13 March 1783, aged 71.

TC

³ John Gilborne, *The medical review, a poem being a panegyric on the faculty of Dublin; physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries, marching in procession to the temple of fame* (Dublin: J A Husband, 1775)

