

Sir Richard Francis Cruise

Born: 1834
President: 1881-82
Died: 1912

Richard Francis Cruise was born in Mountjoy Square, Dublin on 3 December 1834. He was the son of a Dublin solicitor and he received his early education at Belvedere College and Clongowes Wood College. He studied medicine at Trinity College graduating in 1858. He gained a lot of clinical experience under Corrigan (qv), Adams (qv) and Smith at the Richmond Hospital. He also assisted Robert McDonnell with his research which was invaluable experience for him as it was McDonnell who carried out the first blood transfusion in Ireland in 1865.

Corrigan had a major influence on him in his undergraduate days and in return Cruise was devoted to him. Over many years they did much work together and when Corrigan was dying, Cruise slept in his house ready for any emergency that might arise.

After his graduation, Cruise was in poor health so he accepted an invitation from a renowned traveller, Count Henry Russell, to visit the United States. There he became an excellent rifle shot.

He became a Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland in 1859 and a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1860. He was awarded MD by Trinity College in 1861 for a thesis on abnormal development of the female genital organs. He became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland in 1864.

He was first attracted to surgery and lectured in anatomy and physiology from 1858 at the Carmichael School attached to the Richmond Hospital. He became a junior physician at the Mater Hospital when it opened in 1861 and lectured in medicine from 1864.

Cruise wrote on many different topics but his most important contribution to medicine was his description of the cystoscope published in 1865. The first cystoscope had been introduced in the US in the 1820s, modified in Paris in the 1850s but had limitations due to poor illumination. Cruise improved the lighting by utilising the thin edge of the flat flame of a paraffin lamp in which camphor had been dissolved. He also designed attachments for the use of the endoscope in examining the rectum, uterus, ears, nose, pharynx and larynx, and the oesophagus. These attachments were made by local Dublin craftsmen.



He had a very complimentary write up in the Lancet. 'We have now at our command an instrument which will enable us to extend and correct our ideas respecting the nature of ailments about which we were formally in the dark.....'¹

Cruise's endoscope was introduced to the London Lock Hospital by Christopher Heath, and from there its use spread to several parts of England. The endoscope was exhibited at the Dublin meeting of the BMA in 1867. William Stokes (qv) praised the instrument as a very significant development in an address delivered before the Medical Society of the College of Physicians in Ireland in 1866.

Cruise was elected President of the Royal College of Physicians on St Luke's Day in 1881. He was also a member of the Senate of the University of Dublin, the Royal University of Ireland and the Royal Irish Academy.

He had many interests outside of medicine. He was a gifted cellist and also composed for the instrument. He was a governor of the Royal Irish Academy of Music. He retained his expertise with the rifle and colleagues remarked at how he could shatter the neck of a champagne bottle at great distance.

He was an accomplished classical scholar translating the *Imitatio Christi* (The Imitation of Christ) into English in 1887. He also wrote a biography of Thomas à Kempis. In addition, he mastered the art of photography so that he could take photos as he journeyed through Holland of places associated with the life of the German Monk. For all of these works he was honoured by Pope Pius X who conferred on him the Grand Cross of St Gregory the Great and a street in Kempen was named after him. He also wrote a biography of Sir Dominic Corrigan (qv) published in 1912.

In his later years, Cruise became interested in psychiatry and in particular the use of hypnosis in medical practice. He studied this extensively at several centres in France and, on returning to Dublin, he started using this as a form of treatment initially to relieve pain.

Cruise's contribution to medicine was recognised in 1896 when he was knighted and, five years later, he was appointed Honorary Physician to King Edward VII.

He lived at 93 Merrion Square. He died on 26 February 1912 and was buried at Glasnevin cemetery. His nephew, the Lord Abbot of Downside, read the graveside prayers, and the coffin was lowered to the chanting of 'Benedictus' by clergy and students of Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, where he had been physician for forty years.

AF

¹ *The Lancet* 1865. I: 327-8

