DR. JAMES BARRY

Doctor James Barry has become a controversial character in recent years. There is no doubt that as he grew up in Merchants quay in Cork above his father's shop, he was about to embark upon a ground breaking journey. In the early 1800's it was not allowed for women to be educated in medicine. But James was not going accept that. In 1809, with the help of General Francisco de Miranda, Dr Edward Fryer, his tutor and Daniel Reardon, the family's solicitor, James changed his name and presentation to male and enrolled in Edinburgh University school of medicine. After qualifying James joined the British army and was posted to Cape town. He held many ranks, sometimes being demoted, in the army.

After many years serving in the British army, James rose to the rank of Inspector General (equivalent to Brigadier General) in charge of military hospitals, the second highest medical office in the British Army. He was well regarded for his work in both sanitation and nutrition. Barry also performed one of the first known successful Caesarean sections in which both mother and child survived. There were many controversies through his life, whether it was his highly held strong opinions or arguments with Florence nightingale, James Barry was a Cork man to be reckoned with.

After a quiet retirement in London, Barry finally died on 25 July 1865. There is no doubt his life was one of highest achievement. For whatever reason, in death, Dr James Barry requested arrangements that would ensure his secret would be carried to the grave. This was not to be. But the least we should give him is the respect for acknowledging him as the man he wanted to be remembered as.

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