



Report on Dr James Barry , Britain's first female Medic.

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Access to Biological Science

For attention of Mark Hetherington and John O'Neill

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1 Introduction

This report has been requested by Mark Hetherington and John O'Neill as part of The Science and Technology in Society Unit. The report is about a woman who dedicated her life to medicine and improved conditions for women, children and soldiers in the 1800's, but lived as a man. This is a time when Science and Technology were developing very quickly and Dr James 'Miranda' Barry had many new ideas. These great ideas paved the way for health care and sick care to the present day. This report is to be submitted on 26th May 2009.

Important dates - James Barry born, 1792 or possible 1795 or even 1789, it is a mystery.

- Date he entered Edinburgh University, 1809
- Qualified with a Doctorate, 1809
- Commissioned as Hospital Assistant to British Army, 1813
- Became Inspector General of Hospitals 1857
- Died from Dysentery 1865

2 Research method and plan

The plan for my Science hero project was as follows.

- By 30th Sep 2008 I had decided on the Scientific hero I was going to do my project on.
- By the end of October 2008 I had produced a brief plan.
- By the 20th November 2008 I had completed my 200 word summary
- By Jan 30th 2009 I had a lot of research and a complete plan.
- By the 30th March 2009 I had completed my Power Point presentation.
- By the 26th May 2009 I had aimed to hand in my final completed report.

3.1 Who was James 'Miranda' Barry?

James Barry was possibly the illegitimate child of a member of the English Aristocracy. He had many high class family links with people such as Lord Charles Somerset.

When he arrived in Edinburgh to study at Edinburgh University it was 1809 and he was approximately fifteen years old. He arrived with a guardian, Mrs. Buckley, but she was not seen again after that. This leads people to believe that he was actually Miss Buckley.

He met with Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War. They had a mutual dislike for each other and this had a major impact on his career. On his death she was quoted to say

"The most hardened creature I have ever met in my life "and considering their

disputes, this was a compliment!

Barry started to have failing health from the age of sixty. A few years later he soon retired and moved back to England. He retired in total seclusion with only his dog and servant, in London, Marley bone, July 1865. He then died in 1865 at approx seventy years of age, where he became infected with Dysentery, the disease he had been fighting to cure his whole life.

Major McKinnon a military Physician had known Barry for many years and he issued the death certificate, but did not examine the body. It was local nurse Sophia Bishop who examined the body and revealed Barry was actually a woman, who had in fact been through childbirth.

Barry was a very important person in Science and also History. He specialized in Gynecology, Obstetrics and Surgical Trauma and brought about many innovative ideas so advanced for his time. She lived her life as a man as it was the only way a woman could practice medicine in the 1800's, and she saved the lives and improved conditions for so many.

Picture 1 - Portrait of James Barry.



Picture 2 - A letter that Barry signed Miss Margaret Anne Bulkley



3.2 The work of James Barry

Once James Barry obtained his degree he joined the British Army in 1812. From 1813 to 1815 he completed a Civilian attachment at Guy's Hospital in London as around about this time, surgery was becoming accepted in medicine. He had a great interest in Preventative medicine, now commonly known as Health Promotion. However his expertise lay in Gynecology, Obstetrics and Surgical Trauma.

He was posted to Cape Colony as an assistant Surgeon in 1815. When he was there he understood the problems of women like no one else. In Cape Colony he performed the first ever cesarean section where mother and child survived. The baby was named after him and he was made godfather.

He also had a great knowledge of Tropical Disease and medicine and became a member of the Vaccine Institute and Inspector Of Leprosy Institute in 1822. He introduced the Small Pox Vaccine to Cape Colony twenty years before it was introduced in England.

Most importantly in those days he had a rare compassion for the soldier, and his family and also prisoners and lepers. Barry made visits regularly to all the hospitals and completed detailed checks of all the facilities. He also campaigned for soldiers and got the drainage and sewers in the barracks fixed and got them feather pillows and mattresses and even got special quarters made up for married couples.

Alcoholism and Venereal Disease were rife and Barry was so advanced and he had the understanding to help with this. He devoted his time and welfare into helping the people with the 'taboo' diseases.

During the Crimean War 1854 Barry was made Deputy Inspector of Hospital's. The death rate was twenty a day. In his time at the hospital he had 462 casualties and only seventeen deaths. This was an amazing figure for his time. This is where he was when he met Florence Nightingale. He was posted to Canadian Commander in Montreal as Major General. This way he never became Director General or received traditional Knighthood. However he was as dedicated in Canada as he was in Cape Colony. In 1857 Florence Nightingale was promoted to Royal Commission on Army Health but it was very well known that it was actually James Barry who was responsible and had arranged and initiated all the changes that were made. Doctor James Barry was an amazing Scientist, Doctor, Surgeon and Soldier; however Florence Nightingale made sure he never received more than a small recognition. He paid a high price for their fall out during the Crimean War.

Picture 3 Scutari hospital unit hand stamp



Picture 4 Scutari Hospital Barracks



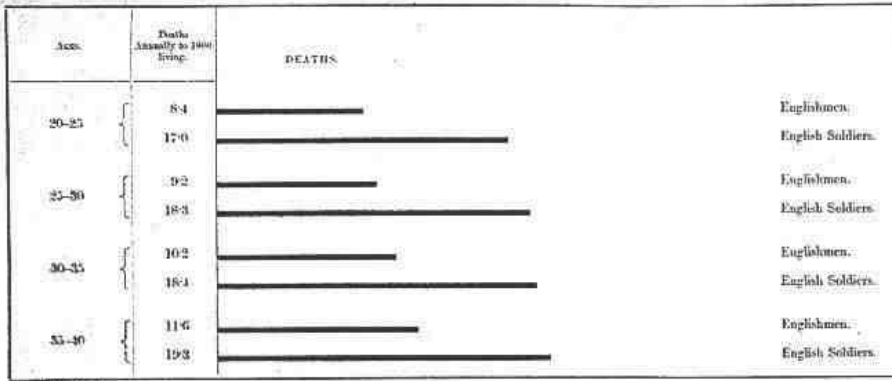
3.3 James Barry s impact on society

Barry was the first female medic to graduate from Edinburgh. Mystery, intrigue and romance all surround this amazing person. There is a plaque dedicated to him outside the Gynecology Department at the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh. He was a person who cared enough to take risks and make changes, never mind the consequences. He cared enough to change health care and service welfare. All the reports on his work show all his ideas in Gynecology and Obstetrics and Surgical Trauma were very advanced for his time and it has led the pathway to better treatment and to the treatment that we have now. He treated people with kindness no matter where they were from. He has been described as an absolute phenomenon who performed extraordinary cures with his ideas. The impact that James Barry had on society has been major, he was almost a celebrity in his time for his ability and his ideas. These ideas were used and advanced and treatments have now progressed amazingly all because Barry and people like him in medicine were willing to take risks.

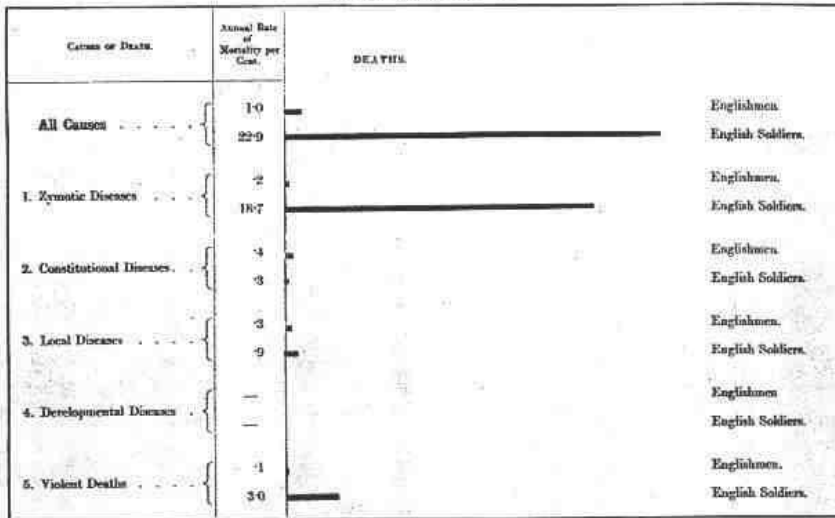
Line diagrams from the Royal Commissions Report

This report led to improvements in Army life. It compared conditions in the Army with Civilians. This report was made up during Barry's time at Scutari.

Representing the Relative Mortality of the ARMY at HOME and of the ENGLISH MALE POPULATION of corresponding Ages.



Representing the Relative Mortality, from different Causes, of the Army in the East in Hospital and of the English Male Population aged 15-45.



4 Conclusions

Did she pose as a man purely for her dedication to medicine?

Or was she a transsexual who felt her identity was a man?

Did she live as a man because if she revealed he was a she after she had her Medical Degree would it be taken away from her?

No one can answer these questions, the mystery is fascinating and no matter what her motives were she made a difference, she shot a man in a duel, made it to the top of her profession in the Army, fought for better care, sanitation, and medical care for prisoners, lepers, soldiers and women.

If she had come clean she would have not been able to do anything in Britain. The Army was selecting doctors and she knew what she had to do to make a difference to people, society, Science and Medicine and she achieved all of that and more.

5 Evaluations

My project progressed very well. I think this is because of the brilliant, fascinating person I chose to be my Science Hero. I have actually bought books to read for my own pleasure on James Barry whilst finding out all the different facts and mysteries surrounding her.

The project has run on time, I have found plenty information on the internet, in the libraries, and in e books and books. I have had no problems at all. I have learned that I enjoy report writing and I enjoy studying a particular person and finding out about them and their life. I have also learned a great deal about time management, research skills and developing my oral presentation technique. This report has been very interesting and I have learned a lot about my Science Hero.

Stacey Jackson

11th May 2009

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