



Dr Christopher Thompson Memorial

Outside the Royal Hotel on Bray Main Street is a memorial to Dr Christopher Thompson (1815-1876).

Of the four Street memorials on the streets on the island of Ireland dedicated to medical doctors, two are dedicated to doctor's named Thompson. Dr Christopher Thompson in Bray and Dr Thomas Thompson in Belfast, both fought an outbreak of cholera.

A county infirmary opened in Wicklow as far back as 1766. The Richmond District Lunatic Asylum and Infirmary (later St. Brendan's Hospital,) Grangegorman, served County Wicklow as an infirmary. The county was entitled to send 27 patients and did so in the cholera outbreak of 1832. Fever hospitals were established in Newtownmountkennedy and Enniskerry in 1814, in Stratford-on-Slaney and Bray in 1817 and in Arklow in 1818.

The old Bray military barracks housed a voluntary dispensary (established 1812) and a fever hospital (1817). It was also used as a cholera hospital. By 1849 there was a fever hospital at Delgany and Wicklow Town and 20 dispensaries dotted around the county. By the late 1890's fever hospitals remained at Arklow, Newtownmountkennedy and Wicklow town.

The number of deaths from cholera in Ireland in the period 1865-1875 was 3,796. Ireland was divided into 8 health regions and the Eastern region that covered Dublin and Wicklow had 2,009 deaths in the 10 year period. The next highest region was the South Western region with 568 deaths. The peak of the cases came in January 1866 when Dr Thomas Lowe Whistler of Bray treated 132 cases of cholera but 75 of his patients died.

DISEASES.	DIVISIONS.								TOTAL, IRELAND.	
	North- Eastern.	North- Western.	Eastern.	North Midland.	South Midland.	Western.	South- Eastern.	South- Western.		
CHOLERA, . . .	1865,	14	9	23	2	12	3	9	19	91
	1866,	75	11	1,714	62	113	52	166	308	2,501
	1867,	38	6	105	84	50	8	65	31	387
	1868,	35	6	33	3	13	5	27	35	157
	1869,	28	4	16	2	10	7	14	17	98
	1870,	13	5	27	7	3	3	9	26	93
	1871,	16	5	21	2	7	4	8	27	90
	1872,	20	2	14	3	16	7	9	30	101
	1873,	21	5	16	6	7	7	6	23	91
	1874,	22	3	19	4	11	9	11	24	103
Av. annual No. 1865-74,	28	6	199	17	24	11	32	54	371	
Number in 1875, . . .	16	2	21	6	3	4	4	24	80	
Rate per } Av. 1865-74,	2.52	1.13	25.19	3.30	5.30	1.43	7.04	6.65	6.83	
100,000 } 1875, . . .	1.44	0.39	2.71	1.21	0.70	0.53	0.91	3.01	1.51	
Inhabitants,										

Dr. Christopher Thompson worked as a doctor in Bray in the 1870's and he lived at 9 Duncairn Terrace, and Sidminton Square, Bray. There was an outbreak of cholera in the Boghall Road area in 1876. Dr. Thompson volunteered to care for the victims of this dangerous disease. As a result, he contracted the disease himself and he died on the 16th of December 1876. He is buried in St. Paul's graveyard across Main Street from the street memorial and close to the fever hospital in Church Terrace. . The monument recognising his contribution was erected following a meeting in the Royal Hotel on 26th January 1877.

Dr Christopher Thompson was born in Dublin in 1815 the son of James Thompson a Dublin Rate Collector. He entered Trinity College on the 18th October 1830 aged 15, in 1839 when he qualified as a doctor his address was 26 Upper Mount Street, Dublin.

He was the medical consultant to Park Street School, Dublin and surgeon to the Finglas and Glasnevin Dispensary. He then embarked on a career with the military and he joined The Royal Army Medical Corps and was assigned to the 43rd Light Infantry at Queenstown (now Cobh). A later posting as assistant surgeon with the Rifle Brigade at Aldershot and at the General Hospital at Portsmouth, he returned to Ireland in 1859 and was a surgeon in St Patrick's Duns Hospital with private consulting in Bray.

By early 1870 he was living at 9 Duncairn Terrace Bray. He fought an outbreak of Cholera in the town in 1876. He died on 16th December 1876 but his death certificate shows he died of Typhoid Pneumonia.

On 26th January 1877 a meeting was held in Quinn's Hotel (Royal Hotel) and it was proposed to erect a memorial to Dr Thompson. His wife Jane Hopkins the daughter Dr William Hopkins of Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin was born in 1810 and she died on 26th October 1888 aged 78 years and is buried in Mount Jerome in Dublin.

The monument suffered some minor damaged during the War of Independence; it was struck by a number of stray bullets during an attack on the police barracks located behind the monument. The upper part of the monument was replaced in more recent times during a restoration of this monument and the Wyvern at the Town Hall.

In 1947 the Bray Urban District Council proposed to remove Dr Thompson Memorial in Bray to make way for additional car spaces. The proposal although carried at the council meeting was not carried out (a previous proposal was to move the monument to the People's Park, Little Bray) The Boston Medical & Surgical Journal published in 1851 carries an interesting article about the Cholera outbreak in Bray of 1849 when 68 persons from the town died.

The village of Bray, in the county of Wicklow, affords an example equally strong, being interestingly situated on the side of a granite mountain, and its single street extending far up the hill. Its position is celebrated as being particularly healthy, and is much resorted to by invalids from Dublin. Here, at all events, no want of proper drainage could possibly exist, and here there is no numerous pauper and filthy population; and yet this village was awfully scourged by the cholera in 1849, while adjacent villages, such as Enniskerry, Loughlinstown and Cabinteely, situated in lower, more confined, and much moister positions, escaped nearly altogether.

The Medical Times Gazette of 1866 and Saunders Newsletter of 8th December 1866 praises the action of the newly formed Bray Town Commissioners for prohibiting vendors for taking water from the Dargle River just below Bray Bridge.. The water was contaminated with sewage. The Vartry water supply scheme came to the town in 1861 and a new Public Health Act came into force in 1875, improved the water quality and sanitation in the town and in the book Bray and its Environs published by A. L. Doran a local chemist in 1903 reported that Bray was the healthiest place in Ireland. Mr Doran is also buried in St Pauls Graveyard close to Dr Christopher Thompson.

Dr Christopher Thompson wrote a number of articles that were published in medical journals. One was on the treatment of cancer of the bladder and another on the treatment of arthritis, both published in 1860 in the Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medicine & Science.

THOMPSON.—*Remarks on the Causes, Diagnosis, and Treatment of Arteritis.* Dublin Q. J. of Med. Sc., Aug., 1860.

Thompson relates 3 cases of arteritis, one of which, occurring in the lower lip, proved fatal; another required amputation of the arm to save life, and a third recovered after almost spontaneous detachment of the right great toe. He proceeds to describe the chief pathological changes that occur in the arteries; the causes and changes that take place in arteritis; the symptoms, diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment. He considers *diffuse* arteritis as identical with diffuse erysipelatoid inflammation. *Adhesive* arteritis induces obstruction of the vessel and gangrene. The symptoms, if a main artery be affected, are pyrexia, heat, soreness, and tension along the track of the vessel, numbness and pricking pain in the distal parts of the limb, which, after a time, becomes pulseless, cold, dark coloured, and œdematous. Deep-seated pain radiates in all directions through the limb, and the cutaneous sensibility becomes extreme and continues so until the complete death of the part. In general arteritis the fever is inflammatory at first, but rapidly becomes typhoid. The patient is sleepless, and tosses about with an uncontrollable feeling of distress. In local arteritis, he recommends leeching, fomentations, or ice, calomel and opium, with effervescing salines. In diffuse, chlorate of potash, camphor, turpentine, quinine, acids, iron, and stimulants with nourishment.

Dr Thomas Thompson, a navy surgeon distinguished in the Napoleonic Wars, was appalled by the conditions in Belfast during the Great Famine. Even though the failure of the potato crop did not directly affect city inhabitants, hoards of refugees from the countryside brought with them devastating epidemics of typhus, cholera, smallpox, and dysentery. Thomas Thompson was the founder of the Charitable Home for the Incurable which provided comfort for the sick. The inscription on the fountain reads, “Whosoever drinketh the water that I shall give him...shall never thirst again”.



The memorial is located at the intersection between Ormeau Avenue and Bedford Street, near the BBC headquarters in Belfast.

Gothic fountain in memory of Dr Thomas Thompson, physician at Home for Incurables, erected by his daughter, Eliza. Formally opened 15 Apr 1885 by Lord Mayor Edward Harland. The contractor: Robert Corry (tender price £280), and Iron lamp standards supplied by McFarlane's of Glasgow.

Sources:

The notes of Dr. Thomas Lowe Whistler.1867

The Boston Medical & Surgical Journal published in 1851

Myra E Leeson

Article about Dr Christopher Thompson published in Bray Cualann Historical Society Journal No 2 Page 31 published 1986.