

## Charles Edward Fitzgerald

**Born:** 1843  
**President:** 1912-1914  
**Died:** 1916

Charles Edward Fitzgerald had the unique distinction of being an eye surgeon who was elected President of the College of Physicians in 1912.

He was the son of Francis A Fitzgerald, Baron of the Exchequer, and Janet (nee Burton) and was born in Dublin on 9 February 1843. His grandfather, Maurice, has been a surgeon in the East India Company Service.

He graduated from Trinity College Dublin in 1868 with an MD. He then went to Paris and worked with Xavier Gralezowski, a leading ophthalmologist and the founder of the first French Journal in Ophthalmology, to further his education in that subject. Returning to Dublin he worked initially in the National Eye and Ear Infirmary in Molesworth Street, Dublin and in the Richmond Hospital, North Brunswick Street, and also found time to pursue a large private practice.

Working with Sir Henry Swanzy he played a leading role in the amalgamation of the National Eye and Ear Infirmary with St Marks Eye Hospital, Dublin to establish the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital in Adelaide Road, Dublin. This opened in 1897 and is still one of the main specialist eye hospitals in Ireland. In 1875, he was appointed Lecturer in Ophthalmology in the Carmichael School of Medicine in North Brunswick Street, Dublin. When this later amalgamated with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, he was appointed Professor of Ophthalmology there in 1889. He was also an examiner in ophthalmology in Dublin University

Following in the footsteps of Sir William Wilde, in 1876 he was appointed Surgeon Oculist in Ireland to Queen Victoria, later serving in the same role to King Edward VII and King George V, a post he held until his death in 1916.

Having been elected a Fellow of the College of Physicians in 1886, in 1912 he was elected President of the College, a most unusual honour for a surgeon. Such was his gratitude for the honour bestowed on him and to mark the fact that he was the first ophthalmic surgeon to hold the office, he presented a medal to the College for the benefit of future Presidents. This is still worn today by College Presidents in pursuing their official duties.

Fitzgerald pursued an interest in food science and in 1896, with George Prescott, took out a patent for a new method of vacuum packing food in metal containers. FitzGerald was married,



# LIVES OF THE PRESIDENTS



firstly to Isabel (nee Clarke) with whom he had four sons, and later to Edythe (née Overend). He lived at 27 Upper Merrion Street, Dublin.

SM



**HERITAGE  
CENTRE**

ROYAL COLLEGE OF  
PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND