

The Cover

Edward Worth (1688-1733)

Portrait of Edward Worth in oil by an unknown artist in the Worth Library of Dr. Steevens' Hospital. Photograph by D. Davison, kindly reproduced by permission of Dr. Steevens' Hospital. The cover is sponsored by Ciba-Geigy Pharmaceuticals.

Richard Steevens and his twin sister Grizel (or Grizelda) arrived in Ireland as infants with their father, a Church of England clergyman in Wiltshire, possibly as refugees from the Puritan regime. Richard entered Trinity College at the age of sixteen in 1670, where he was elected a scholar in 1674, and subsequently graduated in arts and became a Master in 1678. It was evidently intended that he should enter the Church, by Richard must have decided that he was more interested in medicine, and after his father's death in 1682 it is to be presumed that he studied that subject, for he graduated as MD in 1687. He was nominated a fellow of the College of Physicians in the charter of 1692, and was twice elected President. On the second occasion, in 1710 when he had been in office but two months, he died. His will was signed on the previous day, and it is related that finding himself near to death he called for his twin sister Grizel, whom he asked if she intended to marry. Having been told that she did not, he completed a will in which the real estate was left to her for life, after which it was "to provide one proper place or building within the City of Dublin for an hospital for maintaining and curing from time to time such sick and wounded persons whose distemper and wounds are curable". At the time of his death Grizel was aged fifty-six and in good health. She wished to see the hospital completed within her lifetime, and so by living frugally and saving the greater part of her income, she enabled the building to begin in 1720. When it was opened in 1733 she was given apartments within it in which she lived until her death on 18 March, 1746, at the age of ninety-three.

One of the trustees nominated by Grizel Steevens was the physician Edward Worth who was also to be a governor and member of the staff at Steevens' Hospital. He belonged to a family from the neighbourhood of Chester, one of whom had come to Ireland in the early seventeenth century, and was prebendary in the diocese of Ross, County Cork. His father, John, was Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. Edward Worth entered Merton College, Oxford, in 1693 when he was aged fifteen. No record exists of his having taken an arts degree, but he went from there to Leyden to study medicine. In 1701 he graduated as MD at Utrecht and returned to Dublin where he was incorporated MD at Trinity College. He was elected fellow of the College of Physicians and was twice elected President, an honour he declined, for reasons unknown. Little is known of his practice or private life. It is probable that he had considerable private means, and though he was a chronic invalid he actively pursued his hobby as a bibliophile. He never attended at Steevens' Hospital, for his death at the age of fifty-five occurred in 1733 shortly before the hospital opened. His generous bequest to the hospital consisted of a sum of £1,000 for its general purposes, and his library of carefully chosen books, magnificently bound. These remain in the hospital, accommodated in a spacious room which has not been altered since arrangement of the books was completed in 1735. They number about 4,500, of which one-third are medical and scientific, while the remainder are ancient classics, and works of history, theology, topography, antiquities and reference volumes. There are twenty-one incunabula, and about twenty-seven books from the press of Aldus. All are today in a remarkable state of preservation, rare in any collection of such age.

(For a brief account of the library and its books see: McCarthy, Muriel. "Dr. Edward Worth's Library in Dr. Steevens' Hospital". *Journal of the Irish Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons* 1977; 6: 141-5. Photograph and details from: *A Portrait of Irish Medicine: An Illustrated History of Medicine in Ireland*: E. O'Brien, A. Crookshank, G. Wolstenholme. Ward River Press, Dublin. 1984. See also: McCarthy Muriel. *An Eighteenth Century Dublin Bibliophile*. *Irish Arts Review*. 1986; 3: 29-35).

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