

## The Cover

# The Smyth Window

*The Smyth Window in the Ulster Medical Institute in Belfast is kindly reproduced by permission of the Institute. The cover is sponsored by Eli Lilly & Co. Ltd.*

This stained-glass window in the Ulster Medical Institute, Belfast, is in memory of Dr. William Smyth and Dr. Brendan McCarthy whose portraits are included. Two roundels show these doctors at work in a typhus epidemic in which Dr. Smyth died. The heroism of nineteenth century Irish country doctors is vividly represented in this window. For a pittance they toiled and many died in their efforts to help the poor throughout the country.

William Smyth (1859-1901), was born at Stonepark, Mountcharles, in 1859, and studied medicine in Dublin, graduating from the Royal College of Surgeons. In 1882, following the death of Dr. Spenser from typhus, he was appointed to the dispensaries of Dungloe and Burtonport. In October 1901 he rowed to the island of Arranmore where he found the entire Gallagher family to be suffering from typhus. For many days he rowed across to the island to treat his patients, who at first would not agree to being transferred to hospital on the mainland for fear that their homes would be burned down by the islanders to prevent the spread of infection. Eventually the family were persuaded to go to hospital, and Dr. Smyth, assisted by Dr. Brendan McCarthy, the Medical Officer of Health for Co. Donegal, rowed the family across the three miles of sea to the Glenties Hospital, where all recovered. Dr. Smyth, however, contracted typhus fever, and died on 19th November, 1901, aged 42.

On 27th November 1902, a stained-glass window to his memory was erected by Sir William Whitla and unveiled by the Earl of Dudley, in the library of the Ulster Medical Institute, Belfast. It was later moved to the Institute's present premises. It is composed of two panels; the one on the left shows the doctor attending to fever patients in a cabin, and on the right their being rowed to the mainland by the two doctors.

*And while the billows break on Arranmore  
Men still shall wond'ring tell and  
wond'ring hear  
How, in a wave-worn bark of yesteryear  
They piloted the sick from shore to shore.*

(The Smyth Window is reproduced from *A Portrait of Irish Medicine: An Illustrated History of Medicine in Ireland*. E. O'Brien, A. Crookshank and G. Wolstenholme. Ward River Press, Dublin 1984, p. 43. For further details see: Rankin M. Dr. William Smyth. Heroic Donegal Doctor. *Donegal Annual (Journal of the County Donegal Historical Society)* 1975-6. pp. 126-130. and Douglas F. *A Hero of Donegal*. Isbister and Co. London 1902. A poem of nine verses was written by Frederick S. Boas in *Songs of Ulster and Balliol*, Constable, London, 1917, p. 21 from which the above stanza is taken).

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