

Bennett, Edward Hallaran

by Linde Lunney

Bennett, Edward Hallaran (1837–1907), surgeon, was born 9 April 1837 at Charlotte's Quay, Cork, fifth and youngest son of Robert Bennett (recorder of Cork, son of a doctor) and his wife Jane (daughter of William S. Hallaran, another well-known Cork doctor). Edward attended Hamblin's School, Cork, and the Academic Institute, Dublin; entered TCD (1 July 1854); and in 1859 took BA and MB degrees, was first to take the recently introduced TCD M.Ch. degree, and was appointed demonstrator in anatomy. In 1864 he graduated MD and became university anatomist and surgeon to Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital, and in 1873 professor of surgery at TCD, succeeding his old teacher R. W. Smith (qv). He greatly enlarged Smith's collection of bone fractures in the college's pathological museum; before the discovery of X-rays, this was a vital teaching and research aid.

Bennett was president (1880) of the Pathological Society of Dublin; in 1881, he described for the first time to the society what became known as 'Bennett's fracture', a fracture of the base of the thumb resembling dislocation. He strongly supported amalgamation of Dublin medical societies into the Royal Academy of Medicine, and was president of this united body 1897–90. He was also president of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (1884), MRIA (1866), and consulting surgeon to four Dublin hospitals.

Although remembered for his work on fractures, Bennett deserves still more recognition as a pioneer of Listerian aseptic surgical methods in Ireland and was an excellent teacher. To test the belief that reptiles could not exist in Ireland he imported two snakes, and reported their survival and reproduction to the Natural History Society of Dublin in 1866. He married (20 December 1870) Frances Conolly Norman, daughter of Conolly Norman of Donegal and cousin of Conolly Norman (qv) (d. 1908). Bennett died 21 June 1907 in Dublin, survived by one of his two daughters. Two bronze portrait medallions by Oliver Sheppard (qv) were made for the TCD school of physic and Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital. A medal is awarded in his memory, together with a TCD postgraduate scholarship in surgery.

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*DNB; WWW; Alumni Dubl.*; R. O'Rahilly, 'Edward Hallaran Bennett (1837-1907)', *Ir. Jn. Med. Sci.*, 6th ser., Feb. 1948, 127–30; Davis Coakley, *Irish masters of medicine* (1992), 205–12; 'The University of Dublin, Trinity College: Department of Surgery: History' (photo) ([www.tcd.ie/surgery/history.php](http://www.tcd.ie/surgery/history.php); accessed June 2005)

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