



THE

NATIONAL

ARCHIVES

# Dr James Barry

Why was he significant in 19th century medicine?

Key Stages 3-4 | Empire and Industry 1750-1850, Victorians 1850-1901

Lesson pack

# Introduction

James Barry, born in 1795 in Cork, Ireland, became a leading doctor with a glittering medical career who did much to raise standards of medical care in and outside the army. He chose to exclusively live and identify as a man, having been assigned female at birth. Sources in The National Archives show how his biological sex became a matter of discussion amongst some of his contemporaries after his death in 1865 and that it was publicly reported. Such an intrusion into a person's personal life is completely unacceptable today.

Archives can reveal historical sources for LGBTQ+ lives that can help us to understand their stories and how they were treated in society. Sometimes, these histories appear to be 'hiding in plain sight', and other times are more difficult to find.

Our understanding of gender and sexuality has changed a lot since the times of James Barry. 'Transgender', meaning someone whose gender identity differs from the sex that they were assigned at birth, was not a term used in the 1800s. However, research has highlighted the significance of James Barry as a transgender man in the history of medicine as both a pioneer and reformer. The text here uses the pronouns he/him in accordance with how Dr James Barry identified himself throughout his life. In the first document shown here, which reveals his appointment as Inspector General of Hospitals in 1857, he signed as 'Dr James Barry, M.D. Esquire.'

Use this lesson to explore archival sources relating to the life of Dr James Barry.

Suitable for:

KS 3 - 4

Time period:

Empire and Industry  
1750-1850

Victorians 1850-1901

# Contents

Introduction	Page 2
Contents	Page 3
Teacher's notes	Page 4
Background	Page 7
External links	Page 10
Connections to curriculum	Page 11
Tasks	Page 12
Source 1	Page 17
Source 2	Page 20
Source 3	Page 22
Source 4	Page 24
Source 5	Page 27
Source 6	Page 29
Source 7	Page 31
Source 8	Page 33
Source 9	Page 38
Source 10	Page 40

## Teacher's notes

This lesson is based on the life of Dr James Barry and his importance as a transgender man and as a significant doctor in the history of medicine. Our understanding of gender and sexuality has changed a lot since the times of Dr James Barry. 'Transgender', for example, would not have been a term used in the 1800s. These records reflect the period that produced them, and some may find their content upsetting in terms of their tone and attitude. The text in the lesson uses the pronouns he/him in accordance with how Dr James Barry identified himself throughout his life and how his contemporaries referred to him.

To begin with, students examine an extract from Dr Barry's personal army service record revealing his course of study at Edinburgh University in medicine. This allows them to compare his medical training to that required in the 18th century and today. The second source is an extract from a document entitled 'Memorandum of the Services of Dr James Barry Inspector General of Hospitals'. Here Dr Barry refers to an important rebellion of the enslaved in the island of Jamaica 1831-32.

The third source, again in Dr Barry's words, describes his service in the Crimean War (1854-56). It is interesting for students to explore these extracts as they help pinpoint Dr Barry's career in its historical context. They help reveal his significance as a reformer and medic as discussed in the Background notes with reference to his 'Memorandum of Services'.

The fourth source is a letter concerning Dr Barry's posting to the colony of Canada. This possibly provides a glimpse into his personality. In the fifth source, students read about Dr Barry's reflections on his period of service in 1859. Subsequent sources concern correspondence between George Graham, Registrar General at General Register Office for the registration of births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales, and Staff Surgeon Dr McKinnon who registered the death of Dr James Barry.

The final two sources show how Dr Barry's biological sex became a matter of discussion amongst some of his contemporaries after his death in 1865. They show how it was publicly reported in the *Medical Times & Gazette* and later in 1910 in the *Daily Mail* newspaper as part of a prurient exposé of 'Women who pose as men'. These sources could also provide the opportunity to extend discussions concerning the role of the press and the Human

## Teacher's notes

Rights Act Article 8: protecting a right to respect a person's private and family life.

### Further questions/activities:

What can The National Archives documents reveal about the lives of LGBTQ+ people in the 19th century?

Did you find any aspects of these documents shocking or surprising?

Why are stories about LGBTQ+ people difficult to find in The National Archives?

What is the value of using archives/museums to learn about the history LGBTQ+ people?

Use the blogs listed below to explore current debates and discussions concerning the life of Dr James Barry and his position in LGBTQ+ history.

Use the websites for further information, research and resources to discover more about LGBTQ+ history and other LGBTQ+ stories.

### Sources

Extract from Dr James Barry's personal army service record. Catalogue ref: WO 25/3910.

Extract from a document entitled 'Memorandum of the Services of Dr James Barry Inspector General of Hospitals. Catalogue ref: WO 138/1.

A second extract from a document entitled 'Memorandum of the Services of Dr James Barry Inspector General of Hospitals. Catalogue ref: WO 138/1

Letter from Dr James Barry to the army General Commanding Officer, 25th January, 1859, Catalogue ref: PRO 30/46/18.

A third extract from a document entitled 'Memorandum of the Services of Dr James Barry Inspector General of Hospitals, Catalogue ref: WO 138/1

Letter to J.B. Gibson, Director General for Army Medical Department from Senior Surgeon D.R. McKinnon, Major, July 1865, Catalogue ref: WO 138/1

## Teacher's notes

Letter to J.B. Gibson, Director General for Army Medical Department from Senior Surgeon D.R. McKinnon, Major, July 1865, Catalogue ref: WO 138/1

Letter from George Graham, Registrar General at General Register Office to Staff Surgeon D.R. McKinnon [see Source 6], 23 August 1865, Catalogue ref: WO 138/1

Letter from Dr McKinnon replying to George Graham, 24 August 1865, Catalogue ref: WO 138/1

Extract from a letter written by Edward Bradford, Deputy-Inspector-General of Hospitals published under the heading, 'The Reputed Female Army Surgeon' in the Medical Times & Gazette, 9 September 1865, Catalogue ref: WO 138/1

Extract from the Daily Mail entitled 'Women who pose as men: An army Surgeon's Career', 27 August 1910, from Dr James Barry's personal file, WO 25/3910

## Background

According to EE Ottoman, after leaving Ireland, James Barry wrote in 1809 that he was 'sailing to Edinburgh with his aunt' who 'wished to have a Gentleman to take care of her on Board Ship and to have one in a strange country'.

Dr James Barry's professional service record for the army (WO 25/3910) gives us an outline of his career after qualifying as a doctor at Edinburgh University in 1812. He qualified as a surgeon in 1813 'before the College of Surgeons' in London. He entered the army at the age of fourteen, was commissioned as an army hospital assistant and stationed at military hospitals in Chelsea and Plymouth, and later made Assistant Staff Surgeon in December 1815.

Barry was sent to the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) in 1817 as a medical officer, and went with the Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, to inspect the frontier settlements. He was then appointed physician to the Governor's household in 1818. He became Assistant Staff Surgeon in 1822 and Surgeon of the Forces in 1827. During his time at the Cape, Barry did much to improve the sanitary conditions in army hospitals with better hygiene and diet for the patients and helped to reduce the spread of disease. He also attempted to improve the regulation of medicines sold. At this time, Dr Barry also performed an early successful caesarean section on a society woman, Wilhelmina Munnik, saving the life of both mother and baby. He was also accused of having a relationship with Lord Charles Somerset, which caused a scandal at the time.

He went on to serve in Mauritius from 1828 and was recalled owing to the illness of Sir Charles Somerset, who later died. Dr Barry was then posted to Jamaica in 1831/2 and returned on leave to England in 1835. As Principal Medical Officer, he was later ordered to St Helena (1836), and then to the Windward and Leeward Islands for 12 months. Later in Antigua, Barbados (1838) and Trinidad, he was in medical charge of the troops while the Inspector General was absent. He returned to England having contracted yellow fever in Trinidad. He resumed service in Malta as Principal Medical Officer, where according 'A memorandum of the Services of Dr James Barry, Inspector General of Hospitals', (WO 138/1): 'I also had the thanks of the Duke of Wellington for my services during [which] that island (Malta) was visited by the cholera'.

## Background

After this, Dr James Barry was promoted to the rank of Deputy Inspector General in the Ionian Islands when he cared for sick soldiers sent to Corfu, wounded during the Crimean War. Barry went on to serve in Crimea for three months where he allegedly had a public spat with Florence Nightingale. After his exceptional work in Greece, which included supporting soldiers of his regiment in Piraeus with 'medicines, comforts and supplies', he was also praised by Admiral Lyons for 'commanding the "Modeste" for my zeal and service having discovered the cause of the malignant fever on board that vessel and for my successful treatment of the sick and the purification of the ship' (WO 138/1).

He was promoted to the highest rank in the army as Inspector General of Hospitals in the British colony of Canada in 1857. He continued to reform living conditions for soldiers and prisoners and those suffering from leprosy. He returned to London after contracting a severe case of bronchitis in 1859, arriving in March 1860 after a difficult sea voyage. He lived in London in retirement and died in 1865. He was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery following a military funeral.

In a letter from Dr McKinnon replying to George Graham on 24 August 1865 (WO 138/1), it is mentioned that a woman claimed that Dr James Barry 'was a female' and wanted money to keep the 'great secret'. Dr Barry left instructions that his body was not to be examined after his death. In documents he consistently identified himself as male and uses male pronouns. He signs himself as 'Dr James Barry' and refers to himself as 'gentleman'. In character, he appears to have had a reputation for being highly outspoken. The document (PRO 30/46/18) concerning a clash he had with church authorities in Canada gives us a little window into his personality but also highlights his constant concern for the soldiers of his regiment.

The documents reveal Dr James Barry not as a woman living as a man choosing a medical career, but as a man living a man's life within the society he found himself in.

Barry could not have used the term 'transgender' to describe himself in the nineteenth century. However, from today's perspective, he would appear to be a significant figure in the context of trans history. According to Jack Doyle, in his article "'The Trans Take": Towards a Transgender Public History' (2019), 'lives like James Barry's are fascinating precisely



## Background

because they reveal the ways in which trans and gender-nonconforming people have navigated, embodied, and survived gender across historical and cultural contexts.'

In some cases, we find out about stories like that of Dr James Barry because their privacy has been invaded, in this case after death. The history of some transgender people may remain untold without the legacy of personal records. Hopefully, the archival material held in The National Archives relating to Dr James Barry can serve to reveal the power of this history and its importance for identity.

## External links

- Search the [Wellcome Collection](#) for more digitised documents on Dr James Barry<sup>1</sup>
- [The National Archives Research guide](#)<sup>2</sup>

### Blogs

- [Rebecca Ortenberg: How history keeps ignoring James Barry](#)<sup>3</sup>
- [Jack Doyle: "The Trans Take": Towards a Transgender Public History](#)<sup>4</sup>
- [David Obermayer: Notes on a Gentleman](#)<sup>5</sup>
- [EE Ottoman: James Barry and the spectre of trans and queer history](#)<sup>6</sup>
- [Mollie Clarke: Radclyffe Hall & LGBT visibility](#)<sup>7</sup>
- [Mollie Clarke: Fanny & Stella piecing together LGBT histories & stories](#)<sup>8</sup>

### Websites

- [Bishopsgate Institute](#)<sup>9</sup>
- [Historic England – Pride of Place: England's LGBTQ Heritage](#)<sup>10</sup>
- [London Metropolitan Archives](#)<sup>11</sup>
- [LGBT collections at the LSE](#)<sup>12</sup>
- [Stonewall Education Resources](#)<sup>13</sup>
- [Transgender Day of Visibility resources](#)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [wellcomecollection.org/collections](http://wellcomecollection.org/collections)

<sup>2</sup> [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/gay-lesbian-history/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/gay-lesbian-history/)

<sup>3</sup> [www.sciencehistory.org/distillations/how-history-keeps-ignoring-james-barry](http://www.sciencehistory.org/distillations/how-history-keeps-ignoring-james-barry)

<sup>4</sup> [medium.com/@jackdoyle\\_76250/the-trans-take-towards-a-trans-public-history-deb1bc9d822b](https://medium.com/@jackdoyle_76250/the-trans-take-towards-a-trans-public-history-deb1bc9d822b)

<sup>5</sup> [notesonagentleman.substack.com/](http://notesonagentleman.substack.com/)

<sup>6</sup> [acosmismachine.com/2015/11/24/dr-james-barry-and-the-specter-of-trans-and-queer-history/](http://acosmismachine.com/2015/11/24/dr-james-barry-and-the-specter-of-trans-and-queer-history/)

<sup>7</sup> [blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/i-need-never-have-known-existence-radclyffe-hall-and-lgbtq-visibility/](http://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/i-need-never-have-known-existence-radclyffe-hall-and-lgbtq-visibility/)

<sup>8</sup> [blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/fanny-and-stella-piecing-together-lgbtq-histories-and-telling-the-stories/](http://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/fanny-and-stella-piecing-together-lgbtq-histories-and-telling-the-stories/)

<sup>9</sup> [www.bishopsgate.org.uk/](http://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/)

<sup>10</sup> [historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/lgbtq-heritage-project/](http://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/lgbtq-heritage-project/)

<sup>11</sup> [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/history-and-heritage/london-metropolitan-archives](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/history-and-heritage/london-metropolitan-archives)

<sup>12</sup> [www.lse.ac.uk/library/collection-highlights/lgbt-collections](http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/collection-highlights/lgbt-collections)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/best-practice-toolkits-and-resources-0>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.glsen.org/activity/transgender-day-visibility>

## Connections to curriculum

### Key stage four:

AQA GCSE History: Britain: Health and the people: c1000 to the present day

Edexcel GCSE History: Medicine in Britain, c1250 present

OCR GCSE History: War and British Society c.790 to c.2010

School programmes of study for Primary/Secondary PSHE where appropriate.

### Key stage three:

Ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745-1901

The history of Dr James Barry could be explored as part of a study on empire through selected sources and transcripts found here.

# Tasks

## Source 1:

Extract from Dr James Barry's personal army service record. This page shows his training at Edinburgh University in medicine, Catalogue ref: WO 25/3910.

- When did Dr James Barry start his studies at Edinburgh University?
- When did he finish?
- What subjects did he study at Edinburgh University?
- Why do you think he studied 'Botany' and 'Medical jurisprudence'? Check the meaning of these terms if necessary.
- What practical training in medicine did James Barry do as part of his studies? Why was this important?
- Why did he study 'Greek and natural & moral philosophy' do you think?
- How do you explain the additional comments written on this document by others?
- Can you suggest any other sources which could be used concerning James Barry's medical training?
- How different is James Barry's training to that of a doctor in the 18th century or today, according to your own knowledge/research?

## Source 2:

Extract from a document entitled 'Memorandum of the Services of Dr James Barry Inspector General of Hospitals'. This was written by Dr Barry at the end of his career after serving in Canada when he returned to London in 1859, although the date stamp on the document is not clear, Catalogue ref: WO 138/1.

In this extract Dr James Barry refers to an important rebellion of the enslaved on the island of Jamaica 1831-32.

- What does this statement indicate about James Barry's age when he started his degree in medicine at Edinburgh University in Source 1?
- What does this extract infer about his qualities and skills as a doctor?

## Tasks

- Find out about the uprising by the enslaved in Jamaica in 1831/2 mentioned by Dr James Barry and the role of its leader Samuel Sharpe and Sir Willoughby Cotton.
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of using personal testimony as historical evidence?

### Source 3:

A second extract from a document entitled 'Memorandum of the Services of Dr James Barry Inspector General of Hospitals'. This was written by Dr Barry at the end of his career after serving in Canada when he returned to London in 1859, although the date stamp on the document is not clear, Catalogue ref: WO 138/1

In this extract Dr James Barry makes refers to the Crimean War (1854-56) fought by an alliance of Britain, France, Turkey and Sardinia against Russia. Whilst serving during the Crimean War, Dr James Barry was supposed to have argued with Florence Nightingale.

- Find out about the Crimean war and Lord Raglan, the commander of British troops mentioned by Dr Barry in this extract.
- What does this extract infer about Dr Barry's work and service during the Crimean War?

### Source 4:

This letter from Dr James Barry to the army General Commanding Officer, 25th January 1859, refers to a disagreement between Dr Barry and two church officials for the Church of St John's in Montreal, Canada. Catalogue ref: PRO 30/46/18.

Dr James Barry was promoted to the highest rank in the army as Inspector General of Hospitals in the British colony of Canada in 1857.

The disagreement concerned the timing of the church Service held for the army. The churchmen complained to the Bishop of Montreal that Dr Barry had 'with such violence of manner and language, accused the Archdeacon and me [the Dean] of refusing to allow

## Tasks

the military service to be changed from 2pm to 9am, stating that we were callous to the spiritual welfare of her Majesty's soldiers, with much more to the same effect, and finishing with a threat to publish us in the London Times newspaper'.

- What does the source infer about Dr James Barry's personality/character?
- What does the letter suggest about his attitude towards the soldiers he was responsible for?
- Can you explain why he might want to change the attendance time 'on sanitary grounds'?
- How does Dr Barry's account of the event compare to that of the Church officials quoted in the caption above?
- What evidence is there that the disagreement became more intense?
- What does this source reveal about the nature of personal testimony in history?

### Source 5:

A third extract from a document entitled 'Memorandum of the Services of Dr James Barry Inspector General of Hospitals'. This was written by Dr Barry at the end of his career after serving in Canada when he returned to London in 1859, although the date stamp on the document is not clear, Catalogue ref: WO 138/1

- Refer to the 'Background' notes to check on the locations where Dr Barry served during his career.
- What difficulties did Dr Barry have to overcome with his different postings abroad?
- Can you think of any difficulties not mentioned in the source?
- What does this personal statement infer about his character/personality?
- What does this extract suggest about how Dr Barry felt about his work and career?
- Can you work out Dr Barry's age at this time? [Use the Background, Sources 1 & 5 to help].

### Source 6:

## Tasks

Letter to J.B. Gibson, Director General for Army Medical Department from Senior Surgeon D.R. McKinnon, Major. 25 July 1865, Catalogue ref: WO 138/1

- What was the cause of Dr Barry's death?
- What does this letter infer about army record keeping?

### Source 7:

Letter from George Graham, Registrar General at General Register Office for the registration of births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales, to Staff Surgeon D.R. McKinnon [see Source 6]. 23 August 1865, Catalogue ref: WO 138/1

- Who is George Graham?
- Why is he writing to Staff Surgeon D.R. McKinnon?
- What is shocking/surprising about this letter?

### Source 8:

Extract from a letter from Dr McKinnon in reply to George Graham [see Source 7], 24 August 1865, Catalogue ref: WO 138/1

- What are McKinnon's views concerning Dr Barry?
- How do his opinions differ from those of the woman mentioned in the extract?
- Is there anything shocking/surprising about this source?
- What does this source infer about the life of Dr James Barry?

### Source 9:

Extract from a letter written by Edward Bradford, Deputy-Inspector-General of Hospitals published under the heading, 'The Reputed Female Army Surgeon' in the Medical Times & Gazette, 9 September 1865, Catalogue ref: WO 138/1

## Tasks

Shortly after Dr Barry's death, his history was reported without respect for his personal life in this publication.

- Why do you think Edward Bradford sent this letter to be published in the Medical Times & Gazette?
- Is Edward Bradford's action appropriate today?
- Which qualities outlined in this extract infer that Dr Barry was a highly effective doctor?
- Which aspects of his personality reportedly caused him to conflict with authority?
- Do these aspects explain events described in Source 4?
- Can you suggest 4 words to describe Dr Barry's personality?
- Which pronouns does this extract use to describe Dr Barry?
- Does the extract reveal anything about how James Barry chose to live his life?
- Do you accept Bradford's conclusion about the 'real marvel of his (James Barry's) history'?
- Is Dr James Barry's significance based on other reasons inferred by the sources?

### Source 10:

Extract from the Daily Mail entitled 'Women who pose as men: An army Surgeon's Career', 27 August 1910, from Dr James Barry's personal file, WO 25/3910

Please note that the tone and language used in article are of their time and unacceptable today. The questions are based on a short extract taken from the article. The whole article is also available for further investigation.

- What is the subject of this article?
- Can you define the following words in the extract? Impersonation; suspected; confessed; sphinx.
- How does this choice of language set the tone/attitude of the article?
- Why is E. Roger's book (published in 1881) called "A Modern Sphinx" do you think?
- Why can an article like this be considered shocking and inappropriate today?
- Does this source reveal anything about attitudes in society in 1910?





# Transcript: Source 1

[N.B. list of named doctors teaching classes shown on the left of document is not transcribed]

...

Return of the Services 3

And

[Added comment: 'See Statements of Services 1, 614']

Professional Education

James Barry M.D. Assistant Staff Surgeon

[Added comment: 'a woman']

From 5th July 1813 to 7th April 1824

I commenced the Study of my Profession at the University of Edinburgh as Literary & Medical Student in the year 1810

The following are the classes I attended before and since my entry into the Service

Practice of Physic

Theory of Medicine: Two courses & clinical lectures 3- 6 months 1811 &1812

Chemistry 18 courses 1810, 1811, 1812

Pharmacy 3 courses of Clinical lectures

Botany

Anatomy 3 courses & Morbid Anatomy 2 courses

Military Surgery

Midwifery

Dissections 3 courses 1810, 11, 12

Clinical surgical lectures

## Transcript (cont.): Source 1

Surgery course

Barclay & Murray's Private lectures, Dr Duncan Just. Medical Jurisprudence [how scientific/ medical knowledge is involved in the law, e.g., in an inquest]

Literary classes in Greek, Natural & Moral Philosophy

Private pupil to Mr Fyfe

Likewise attended the undermentioned Hospitals a regular Pupil, during the Period...

Guys & St Thomas in London for 6 months in the year

Royal Infirmary, Dispensary of Lying in Hospital in Edinburgh for 12 months in the year 1811  
as perpetual pupil

in Dublin for      Months in the year

in Glasgow for      Months in the year

I received a Diploma in 1812 as Doctor of Medicine from the University

...



Source 2: Extract 1/3: 'Memorandum of the Services of Dr James Barry Inspector General of Hospitals'. Catalogue Ref: WO 138/1

189/3

Memorandum of the Services of  
Dr. James Barry Inspector  
General of Hospitals -

Entered the Army as a Medical  
Officer under the age of fourteen years  
and served first at the Cape of Good Hope  
about thirteen years attached to the personal  
Staff of the late General Lord Charles  
Somerset on whose resignation I was  
promoted to the rank of Staff Surgeon  
and sent to the Mauritius, I served there  
about eighteen months and was recalled in  
consequence of the serious illness of Lord  
Charles Somerset upon whose death I pro-  
ceeded to Jamaica and served under Sir  
Willoughby Cotton during the Rebellion and  
the burning of the Plantations by the  
Negroes, I was Medical charge of the Troops  
employed on that service the Inspector  
General remaining at Head Quarters.

RECEIVED  
JAN 20  
185

## Transcript: Source 2

Memorandum of the Services of Dr James Barry Inspector General of Hospitals.

I entered the Army as a medical officer under the age of fourteen years and served first at the Cape of Good Hope about thirteen years attached to the personal Staff of the late General Lord Charles Somerset on whose resignation, I was promoted to the rank of Staff Surgeon and sent to the Mauritius [an island in the Indian Ocean]. I served there about eighteen months and was recalled in consequence of the serious illness of Lord Charles Somerset upon whose death I proceeded to Jamaica and served under Sir Willoughby Cotton during the Rebellion and the burning of the Plantations by the Negroes. I was in medical charge of the Troops employed on that service the Inspector General remaining at Head Quarters....



Source 3: Extract 2/3: 'Memorandum of the Services of Dr James Barry Inspector General of Hospitals'. Catalogue Ref: WO 138/1

I was shortly after promoted to the rank of Deputy Inspector General in the Ionian Islands. During the period of my service there War was declared against Russia and at my suggestion to Lord Raglan and Inspector General Sir J Hall 500 of the sick and wounded from the Crimea were sent and placed under my charge at Corfu, upwards of 400 of them returned fit for active service, having been restored to health in an unusually short period and I myself proceeded on leave to the Crimea where I remained about three months with the 11<sup>th</sup> Division before Sebastopol and made myself useful as opportunities offered which can be testified by Sir John Hall and the Colonel and Officers of

## Transcript: Source 3

I was shortly after promoted to the rank of Deputy Inspector General in the Ionian Islands. During the period of my service there, war was declared against Russia and at my suggestion to Lord Raglan and Inspector General Sir J. Hall, 500 of the sick and wounded from the Crimea were sent and placed under my charge at Corfu, upward of 400 of them returned fit for active service having been restored to health in an unusually short period and I myself proceeded on leave to the Crimea where I remained about three months with the 4th Division before Sebastopol and made myself useful as opportunities offered which can be testified by Sir John Hall and the Colonel and officers...



Source 4: Letter from Dr James Barry to the army General  
 Commanding Officer, 25th January 1859. Catalogue Ref: PRO 30/46/18

30

*a true copy*  
*W. H. No. 10. P. H.*  
*ans.*

Montreal 25<sup>th</sup> Jan'y 1859

Sir

Having perused the letters from  
 the Bishop and Dean of Montreal  
 placed in my hands by you, on  
 the subject of a conversation I had  
 with the latter gentleman relative  
 to the attendance of the troops at  
 Divine Service. —

I beg to state to the Lt. General's  
 Commandy that having been charged  
 by a message I had previously re-  
 ceived from the Dean through Mr.  
 Rogers the Military Chaplain, I was  
 both warm and excited in urging

The Lt. General  
 Montreal 32



Source 4: Letter from Dr James Barry to the army General  
Commanding Officer, 25th January 1859. Catalogue Ref: PRO 30/46/18

That the houses for the attendance  
of the troops should on sanitary  
grounds be changed, and if in so  
doing I used the words attributed  
to me by the Dean of Montreal, they  
I withdrew them, and to express my  
great regret, that I should have  
been led to use such expressions to  
him. —

I have the honor to be

Dr.  
Your obedient  
servant

(Signed) James Barry M.D.  
Inspector General

## Transcript: Source 4

Montreal 25th January 1857

Sir,

Having perused the letters from the Bishop and Dean of Montreal placed in my hands by you on the subject of a conversation I had with the later gentlemen relative to the attendance of the troops at Divine Service.

They [to] state [to] the Lieutenant General Commanding that having been changed by a message I had previously received from the Dean, Mr Byers the Military Chaplain, I was both warm and excited in urging that the hours for the attendance of the troops should on sanitary grounds be changed and if in so doing I used the words attributed to me by the Dean of Montreal, I beg to withdraw them, and to express my great regret that I should have been led to use such expressions to him.

I have the honour to be, your obedient

(Signed) James Barry M.D.

Inspector General



Source 5: Extract 3/3: 'Memorandum of the Services of Dr James Barry Inspector General of Hospitals'. Catalogue Ref: WO 138/1

On each change of Station I was put to an immense personal outlay the Climates of each being of such different temperatures.

Each move entailed a sacrifice of property then in my possession and an outlay to procure that required for the service in prospect.

I am now prepared to serve Her Majesty in any quarter of the Globe to which I may be sent and am loath to close a career which impartially may be deemed to have been a useful and faithful one without some special mark of Her Majesty's gracious favor.

James Barry  
Inspector General

## Transcript: Source 5

...

On each change of station, I was put to an immense personal outlay, the climates of each being of such different temperatures. Each move entailed a sacrifice of property then in my possession and an outlay to procure that required for the service in prospect. I am now prepared to serve Her Majesty in any quarter of the Globe to which I may be sent and am now loath to close a career which impartially may be deemed to have been useful and faithful one without some special mark of Her Majesty's favour.

James Barry M.D.  
Inspector General



Source 6: Letter to J.B. Gibson, Director General for Army Medical Department, 25 July 1865. Catalogue Ref: WO 138/1

18013  
2

25 Duke St  
Westminster  
July 25/65

RECEIVED  
JULY 25  
1865  
ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

Sir

I have the honor  
to report that the Officer,  
named in the margin,  
died at 11 o'clock  
A.M. this morning.

Inspector General  
Dr. James Barry  
address.  
14. Margaret Street  
Cavendish Square

Disease "Diarrhea"

18913

I have the honor to be,  
Sir,  
Your most obedient humble servant

D. R. McKinnon, M.D.  
D. W. R. Rannion M.B.

S. Surgeon Major

Sir J. B. Gibson, K.C.B.  
Director General.

## Transcript: Source 6

25 Duke Street,  
Westminster

July 25th 1865

Sir,

I have the honour, Inspector General to report that the officer, named in the margin address died at 4'o clock am this morning.

Dr James Barry

14 Margaret Street,  
Cavendish Square'

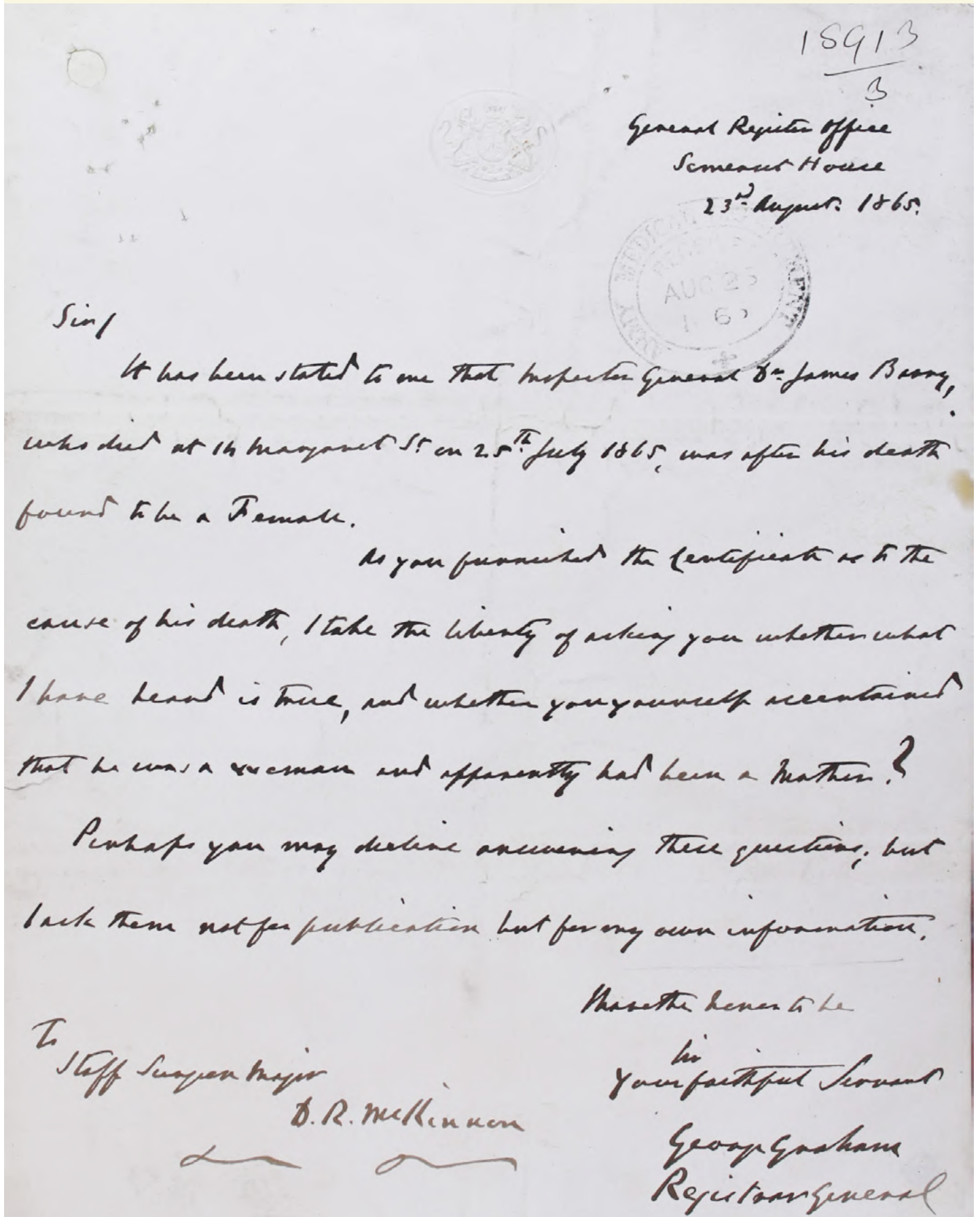
Disease: Diarrhoea

I have the honour to be Sir, your most obedient humble Servant,

D.R. McKinnon M.B.  
Staff Surgeon, Major.

Sir J.B. Gibson K.C.B  
Director General

Source 7: Letter to Staff Surgeon D.R. McKinnon [see source 6], 23 August 1865. Catalogue Ref: WO 138/1



## Transcript: Source 7

General Register Office

Somerset House

23rd August 1865

Sir,

It has been stated to me that Inspector General Dr James Barry, who died at 14 Margaret Street on 25th July 1865, was after his death found to be female.

As you furnished the Certificate as to the cause of his death, I take the liberty of asking you whether what I have heard is true, and whether you yourself ascertained that he was a woman and had apparently, been a mother?

Perhaps you may decline answering these questions, but I ask them not for publication but for my own information.

I have the honour to be Sir, Your Faithful Servant,

George Graham

Register General

To: Staff Surgeon Major

D.R. McKinnon



Source 8: Letter from Dr McKinnon in reply to George Graham [see Source 7], 24 August 1865. Catalogue Ref: WO 138/1

Copy

18913  
3

Recruiting Department  
25 - Duke St. Westminster  
24<sup>th</sup> August 1865

Sir,

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 23<sup>rd</sup> August respecting the death of Inspector General Dr James Barry.

I had been intimately acquainted with that gentleman for a good many years, both in the West Indies, & in England; and I never had any suspicion that Dr Barry was a female.

I attended him during his last illness, and for some months previously for Bronchitis, & the affection causing his death was Diarrhoea produced apparently by errors in diet.

On one occasion after Dr Barry's death, I was sent for to the office of Sir Charles McGregg, & there the woman who performed the last offices for Dr Barry was waiting to speak to me.

She wished to obtain some particulars of her employment, which the Lady who kept the lodging house in which Dr Barry died had refused to give her.

Amongst other things she said Dr Barry was a female & that I was a pretty Doctor not to

McKinnon

ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT  
RECEIVED  
AUG 25  
1865



Source 8: Letter from Dr McKinnon in reply to George Graham [see Source 7], 24 August 1865. Catalogue Ref: WO 138/1

knows this & that she would not like to be attended by me. I informed her that it was none of my business whether D. Barry was a male or a female - & that I thought it as likely, he might be neither, viz an imperfectly developed man.

She then said that she had examined the body & that it was a perfect female & that there were marks of her having had a child when very young. I then enquired how have you formed this conclusion? The woman pointing to the lower part of her stomach, said from marks here. I am a married woman, & the mother of nine children & I ought to know.

The woman seemed to me to think that she had become acquainted with a great secret & wished to be paid for keeping it. I informed her that all D. Barry's relatives were dead, & that it was no secret of mine, & that my own impression was that D. Barry was a Hermaphrodite.

But whether D. Barry was male, female, or hermaphrodite I do not know, nor had I any purpose in making the discovery.

Source 8: Letter from Dr McKinnon in reply to George Graham [see Source 7], 24 August 1865. Catalogue Ref: WO 138/1

as I could positively swear to  
the identity of the body as being  
that of a person whom I had been  
acquainted with as Inspector  
General of Hospitals for a period  
of eight or nine years.

I have the honor to be

Sir,  
Yours faithfully  
(Signed)  
Dr McKinnon.

George Graham Esq  
Registrar General



## Transcript: Source 8

...

I had been intimately acquainted with that gentleman for a good many years, both in the West Indies, & in England and have never had any suspicion that Dr Barry was a female. I attended him during his last illness, and for some months previously for bronchitis and the affection [infection] causing his death was diarrhoea produced apparently by errors in diet.

On one occasion after Dr Barry's death, I was sent for to the office of Sir Charles McGregor, and there the woman, who performed the last offices for Dr Barry [laid out the body before burial] was waiting to speak to me.

She wished to obtain some perquisites [tip/gift in addition to her wages] of her employment which the lady who kept the lodging house in which Dr Barry died had refused to give her.

Amongst other things she said Dr Barry was a female and that I was a pretty doctor not to know this [not a very good doctor] and that she would not like to be attended by me. I informed her that it was none of my business whether Dr Barry was a male or a female- and that I thought it as likely he might be neither, viz. an imperfectly developed man.

She then said that she had examined the body and that it was a perfect female and farther that there were marks of her having had a child when young. I then enquired: How have you reached this conclusion? The woman pointing to the lower part of her stomach, said from marks here, I am a married woman, and mother of nine children, I ought to know.

The woman seemed to me to think that she had become acquainted with a great secret and wished to be paid for keeping it. I informed her that all Dr Barry's relatives were dead and it was no secret of mine and that my own impression was that Dr Barry was a hermaphrodite [intersex].

But whether Dr Barry was male or female or hermaphrodite I do not know, nor had I any purpose in making the discovery as I could positively swear to the identity of the body as being that of a person whom I had been acquainted with as Inspector General of Hospitals

## Transcript: Source 8

for a period of eight or nine years.

Sir

Yours faithfully

Signed

D.R. McKinnon

Source 9: Letter by Edward Bradford: 'The Reputed Female Army Surgeon', 9 September 1865. Catalogue Ref: WO 138/1

whole life. He was gifted with much acuteness, and had a good memory. So long as he was treated with deference he was good humoured, and would enjoy mirth at his own expense; but if anything touched his importance, his anger knew no bounds; there was no authority or station which he (secure in his own importance) would not set at defiance. After this period he was stationed at Malta and at Corfu, and during the Crimean war he appeared with his huge sword and spurs at Balaclava.

He subsequently obtained the rank of Inspector-General, and went to Canada, where he served several years. He finally retired from the service in 1859, and died in London in July last.

Through life his irritable and impatient temper brought him into constant collision with authority; he was, however, very capable of generous feeling, and of gratitude to those who were kind to him.

The stories which have been circulated about him since his death are too absurd to be gravely refuted. There can be no doubt among those who knew him that his real physical condition was that of a male in whom sexual development had been arrested about the sixth month of foetal life. It is greatly to be regretted that the opportunity of his death was allowed to pass without exact observation of his real condition by a skilled person.

The real marvel of his history is, that a being of a frame so feeble, without domestic resources, with a temper so irritable and even mischievous, in spite of frequent severe sickness in tropical climates, and constantly at variance with authority, should have attained the highest rank in the Medical Department, and have lived to the age of 65 years.

August.

EDWARD BRADFORD.

## Transcript: Source 9

...

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August. Edward Bradford.







## Transcript: Source 10

...

"Dr James Barry"

Army surgeon and Inspector- General of Hospitals. In a sketch of "his" career Lieutenant-Colonel Rogers advances evidence that he really was a woman.

In spite of the common opinion that a woman cannot for long pass as a man without arousing suspicion two striking instances have recently come to light where for a number of years the imposition has never been suspected.

Marie le Roy passed for twenty-five years as Larry Lloyd at Enfield and her sex was only discovered on her death a few weeks ago, and Mrs Elena Smith has engaged for the last five years in business in New York as "Mr A.L. Martinez" and her sex was not even suspected till she confessed it with some scathing criticism of the American as he appears to his fellow men.

One of the most interesting of these impersonations is that of Dr James Barry, M.D. Inspector-General of Hospitals, concerning whom Lieutenant-Colonel E Rogers, sends us the following account taken from the introduction of his book: "A Modern Sphinx"

...



## Why do our hyperlinks come with footnotes?

Our resources are designed to be printed and used in classrooms, which means hyperlinks aren't always accessible digitally. We include the full link at the bottom of the page so that you can type in the address without distracting from the main text of the lesson materials.

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The National Archives Education Service also offers free workshops onsite in Kew and online in your classroom.

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Our [Online Workshops](#) allow our Education Officers to teach through your projector, leading discussions and guiding students through activities based around original documents. All you need is a computer with a projector, webcam and microphone. We'll arrange a test call before your session to check the tech is working.

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