

Abstract presented at the meeting British Society for the History of ENT
Held December 3rd 2015
In the Toynbee McKenzie Room, at the Royal Society of Medicine, London

Gulliver's vertigo

Emma Hoskison

The political satirist, author and poet Jonathan Swift, whose seminal work *Gulliver's Travels*, was born in Dublin in 1667. He was educated at Kilkenny College and Trinity College, Dublin before fleeing to England with the outbreak of political unrest in Ireland from the Glorious Revolution of 1688. He was employed as a personal assistant to Sir William Temple, an English diplomat. Swift experienced fits of giddiness which forced his return to the Ireland in 1690. He was ordained as a priest and became Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin until his death in 1745 where he was buried.

Swift suffered from vertiginous episodes and tinnitus throughout his latter years and had a stroke which affected his mental state. However, it was not until his skull was exhumed and studied by Sir William Wilde, father of Oscar, in 1835 that a "loose bone" in the inner ear was found. The description of his illness as documented by numerous clinicians is consistent with a diagnosis of Meniere's disease preceding Prospero Meniere's first description by over 25 years.

Swift wrote prose and poetry, with his best known work *Gulliver's Travels* cited as a classic of English literature. *Gulliver's* encounters include being shipwrecked on Lilliput where Swift satirises the political scene in Europe, mocks the religious conflicts of the time and develops the sense of innate human corruption. The story has been retold to generations and Swift's legacy lives on in film, animation, artwork and quotation. The change in *Gulliver* from optimist at the outset to misanthrop is thought to reflect the author's deteriorating mental state but could also potentially be linked to the impact of his otological symptoms.