

## Robert Barany's commemorative memorabilia issued since his death in 1936

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### Abstract :

Robert Barany (1876-1936) was the first otorhinolaryngologist to receive the Nobel Prize in physiology and medicine in 1914. The aim of the present study is to try to collect Barany's various honorary and commemorative memorabilia produced since his death in 1936, which notably include the dates of his 60th and 100th anniversaries of winning the Nobel Prize, and 100th anniversary of his birth. Various objects have been found, notably three medals, one society, seven different official and one Cinderella stamps with various first day covers, seven different privately issued cover letters, two stylized portraits, two sets of coins, two streets, two postal cards and one playing card, two busts, two stickers, and one film poster. All these memorabilia demonstrate that Robert Barany remains a famous Nobel Prize winner and also a well-known otorhinolaryngologist.

### Introduction

Robert Barany (1876-1936) was the first otorhinolaryngologist to receive the Nobel Prize in physiology and medicine for the year 1914 (officialized November 29, 1915 and delivered in 1916, September 11, because he was a prisoner-of-war during World War I in Merw, Turkestan). He received this prize for his work on the caloric reaction resulting from the stimulation of the semicircular canals with cold and warm water that he developed from 1903 when he began working in the otological department at Vienna University, under the leadership of Adam Politzer (1835-1920) until 1907 and then Viktor Urbantschitsch (1847-1921) until 1914. This very simply obtained reaction has become the basis for the understanding of some balance diseases. Barany's research provided the physician with important clues in the diagnosis of diseases of the central vestibular apparatus, and in its connection with the nucleus of the ocular muscles, the cerebellum, and the spinal cord. After being awarded the Nobel Prize, Barany faced accusations from colleagues of not

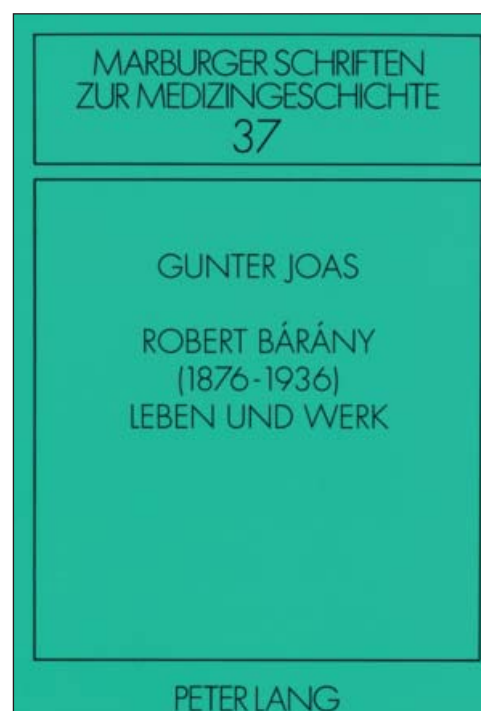


Fig. 1. Title page of Barany biography written by Gunter in 1997

acknowledging his collaborators' contributions, and he never returned to Vienna. Most of these charges were proven to be false, but he felt dejected, and spent the rest of his life working in Uppsala, Sweden, where he died in 1936. In 1997, the most complete and referenced biography was published by Joas Gunter (Figure 1) <sup>(1)</sup>. Written in German, this 612-page-long book, is a key mark for the history

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of Barany's life and work. It remains a regular subject of research <sup>(2)</sup>.

The aim of the present study is to try to collect Barany's various honorary and commemorative memorabilia produced since his death in 1936, which notably include the dates of his 60th and 100th anniversaries of winning the Noble Prize, and 100th anniversary of his birth. The research was conducted through the analysis of the results given by Web resources, PubMed, eBay, Delcampe, stamps and coins market collectors and sellers. The limitation of this study is the probable existence of other marks of recognition, not listed during this research. Various memorabilia were found, notably, three medals, one society, eight different official and one Cinderella stamp with various first day covers, seven different private issued cover letters, two stylized portraits, two sets of coins, two streets, two busts, two postage cards, two stickers, one playing card, and one film poster. They will be described and presented here.

#### MEDALS

In 1948, the medical faculty at Uppsala University awarded for the first time the "Barany Jubilee Medal" inaugurated in 1936 on the initiative of the Swedish otologist Gunnar Holmgren (1875-1954) born in Uppsala, who collected a sum for Barany's 60th birthday. Unfortunately, Barany died a few days before. Therefore, this sum became the "Barany Jubilee fund" given to Uppsala University who decided to produce a medal for outstanding researchers in the vestibular apparatus <sup>(3)</sup>. "The Medal was engraved in 1947 by Erik Lindberg [1873-1966, Swedish sculptor and engraver, modeller of Nobel's medals] and struck in gold. Its establishment has been assured by contributions from otologists throughout the world. According to the statutes, it is to be awarded to a research scholar considered to have achieved the most outstanding results in the fields related to balance – Henceforth the medal will be awarded every fifth year" <sup>(4)</sup> until 1988. The face side of the medal depicts an original profile portrait of Barany and on the reverse side is written: "Excellenti auris vestibuli investigatori ordo medicorum Upsaliensis [The most excellent investigator of the vestibular part of the ear. Medical order of Uppsala]" (Figure 2). Candidates for this award are proposed by a committee of three members of the medical Faculty in Uppsala, the tenured professors in otorhinolaryngology (chairman), ophthalmology and neurology. Since 1988, the Barany gold medal has been presented to "the author who during the last completed six-year

period has published the most valuable work on the vestibular apparatus in the widest sense of this term". The laureates were Adrianus Paulus Huibertus Antonie de Kleyn (1883-1949) in 1948, Albertus Anton Johan van Egmond (1887-1969) in 1953, Charles Skinner Hallpike (1900-1979) in 1958 <sup>(5)</sup>, Alf Brodal in 1963, Gösta Dohlman in 1968, Otto Loewenstein in 1973, Cesar Fernandez in 1978, Ottavio Pompeiano in 1983, Geoffrey Melvill Jones in 1988, Yasuo Harada in 1994, Thomas Brandt in 2000, Toshiaki Yagi in 2006, and Ian Curthoys in 2012.

A second medal, the Hallpike-Nylen medal was introduced in 1990. This Hallpike-Nylen medal is intended for basic research with a preference for the younger members of the Barany Society and is delivered every two years. It is a silver-plated medal with the same picture of Barany on the face and the legend "Hallpike-Nylen medal" on the back (Figure 3). The laureates were Volker Henn in 1990, Ake Flock in 1992, David Zee in 1994, Ian Curthoys in 1996, Masao Ito in 1998, Muriel Ross in 2000, Dominik Strautmann in 2002, Toshiaki Yagi in 2004, Dora Angelaki in 2006, Masao Ito in 2008, Kathleen Cullen in 2010, Pierre Paul Vidal in 2012, Richard Rabbitt in 2014 and Alain Berthoz in 2016.

A third bronze medal with a portrait of "Robert Barany 1876-1936", and on the back "Premio Nobel da medicina 1914, fisiologia e patologia do aparelho vestibular [First Nobel of medicine in 1914, physiology and pathology of vestibular organ]" was carved by a Brazilian art sculptor José de Moura Resende Filho (Figure 4), unknown year.

#### BARANY SOCIETY

The "Barany Society", or "the International Society for Neuro-Otology", was founded in 1960 in Padua under the hospices of the Collegium Oto-Rhino-Laryngologicum Amicitiae Sacrum, on the initiative of the English otologist Charles Skinner Hallpike, and the Swedish otologist at Uppsala Carl Olof Nylen (1892-1978) <sup>(6)</sup>. During this foundation meeting also present were the Swiss otologist André Montandon (1905-1983), the German otologist Hermann Frenzel (1895-1967), the Swedish otologist Gösta Dohlman (1890-1983), the Italian otologist Michele Arslan (1904-1988) and the Belgian otologist François Crabbé (1900-1975). Carl Olof Nylen was its first president. The first official meeting was organized in 1963 in Uppsala



Fig. 2. Barany Society Gold medal



Fig. 3. Barany Society Silver medal



Fig. 4. Barany unofficial Bronze medal by Resende

with the publication of a booklet “In memory of Robert Barany” (Figure 5) (7). An unofficial meeting was already organized in 1961 in Paris. This Society became the guarantor of the continuity of Barany’s work and memoirs. The aim of the

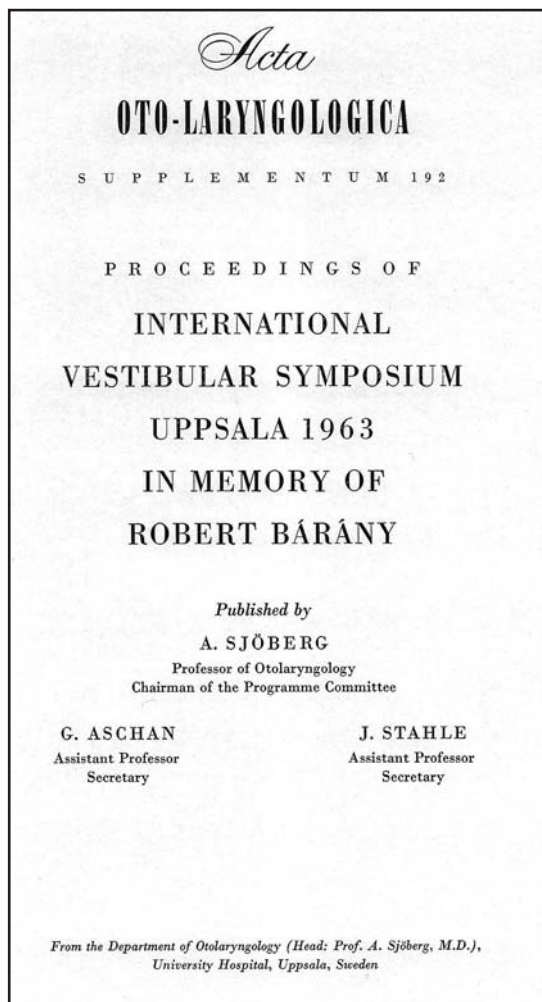


Fig. 5. Title page of International vestibular symposium Uppsala 1963 in memory of Robert Barany

Barany Society is to facilitate contact between basic scientists and clinicians engaged in vestibular research and to stimulate otoneurological research. It initiates worldwide evidence based consensus and standardisation regarding the definition of syndromes, diseases, diagnostic procedures and treatment by means of its standardization committees and discussions with other stakeholders. The original meetings were held every five years in Uppsala, and from 1988 every sixth year. In between, meetings are held every two years in a city elected by the members. The president of the Society is the head of OHNS Clinic in Uppsala.

## POSTAL STAMPS

As for many other Nobel Prize Winners, postal stamps are the most common way to remember Barany. Eight different ones were found, seven official and one Cinderella. The first day cover (FDC) issued on the same day as the new stamp is more attractive because it is enhanced by a cachet



Fig. 6. Barany stamp issued in 1974 in Sweden

complementing the stamp and possibly by different presentations for the same stamp. The design comes in all shapes, sizes, and colors. It may be printed, engraved, thermographed or produced by a variety of other methods. Even, some collectors make their own rendering their complete search nearly impossible. These FDC are separated into two categories: official or sponsored by an individual or an organization who proposed the handstamp, and ordinary made by the Post Office. Their classification is not always easy even by specialist. For the 60th anniversary of Barany’s Nobel Prize award, Sweden produced a stamp on December 10th 1974 (Figure 6). It represents a portrait of Barany with, in the background, the central part of the building “Universitas Litterarum Vindobonensis”, i.e. the Viennese University, where Barany worked before moving to Uppsala. It was made by the Swedish designer Lennart Forsberg and the Swedish engraver Arne Wallhorn. The portrait of Barany was largely inspired by the portrait collected by the Nobel Prize Foundation. This stamp has already been described in several medical journals (8-9). At least two different official FDC associating the Barany stamp with two other 1914 Nobel laureates Max von Laue and Theodore William Richards were found (Figure 7).

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Barany, Austria (Republik Österreich) issued a postage stamp on 22nd April 1976 showing a



Fig. 7. Barany  
2 different Sweden  
FDC issued in 1974



Fig. 8. Barany stamp issued in  
1976 in Austria

portrait of Barany (Figure 8, p.147). It was designed by the Austrian Adalbert Pilch and engraved by the Austrian Alfred Nefe referring to the Nobel's collection portrait. It was associated with at least 15 different official FDC (Figures 9, below). This stamp was regularly described in various medical journals<sup>(8-11)</sup>, and remains the most well-known one. Association of this stamp with the Swedish 1974 one was found on another particular FDC (Figure 10). Another FDC was also associated with the 1000 anniversary of the city of Reith in Alpbachtal Tirol and its 55th balloon exhibition (Figure 11).

On 30th November 1988, Hungary (Magyar Posta) issued a series of six portrait stamps related to Hungarian-born Nobel Prize winners, one of them being Barany (Figure 12). It was designed by the Hungarian Karoly Vagyoczky and referred to the Nobel's collection portrait. It has been presented in a few articles in medical literature<sup>(8-9,12)</sup>. On the FDC, the Barany stamp was associated with two other Hungarian Nobel laureates, Denes Gabor and Richard Adolf Zsigmondy (Figure 13). Hungary printed a second stamp on 16th November 1995 to commemorate 100th anniversary of Nobel's



Fig. 9. Barany 15 different Austria FDC issued in 1976



Fig. 10. Barany Austria & Sweden FDC



Fig. 11. Barany Austria FDC with Reith anniversary



Fig. 12. Barany stamp issued in 1988 in Hungary



Fig. 13. Barany Hungary FDC issued in 1988



Fig. 14. Barany stamp issued in 1995 in Hungary

testament. Surrounded by the five different medals representing the five different Nobel Prizes, this double stamp listed eleven Hungarian Nobel Prize winners, notably Barany (Figure 14).

In 1997, the Republic of Tchad (République du Tchad) issued a series of stamps about space conquest, some of them associating rockets, astronauts and Felix the cat. One represents a portrait of Barany, referring to the Nobel's collection portrait, associated with Felix the cat 1963 and the moon in background (Figure 15, p.151). No mention of the designer is found. In 1963, French rocket scientists decided to be the first people to launch cats into space. A story explains that a very clever male cat named Felix was found in the back alleys of Paris and was shipped off to the rocket base Hammaguir in the Algerian Sahara desert, where he proved his cleverness by escaping<sup>(13)</sup>. Nevertheless, another female cat named Félicette was strapped into the

Véronique AG1 rocket on October 18th, 1963. She sported an electronic transmitter on her forehead to transmit neurological data to the scientists. The flight lasted less than ten minutes without going into orbit<sup>(14)</sup>. The capsule and Félicette were safely recovered and Félicette became famous. Why it is Felix and not Félicette on the stamp, and why Barany associated with Felix remains a mystery. A souvenir sheet (bloc) put forward this stamp (12). It represents, around the stamp, three cats, one "cat in his spatial capsule", the "Véronique rocket", and the earth seen from space in the background (Figure 16).

Guinea-Bissau (Guiné-Bissau) edited on November 23rd 2009, a series of three





Fig. 15. Barany stamp issued in 1997 in Tchad



Fig. 17. Barany stamp issued in 2009 in Guinea-Bissau

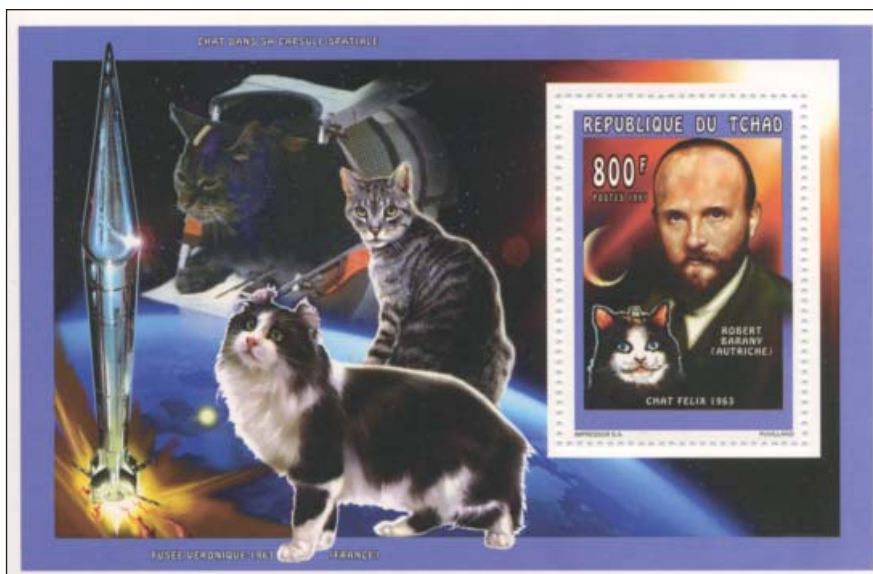


Fig. 16. Barany Tchad bloc

stamps related to the Nobel Prize winners of 1914. One represents a portrait of Barany with in the background the flags of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, and a sketchy drawing of the heart with electrocardiogram (Figure 17). No mention of the designer is found. It refers to another portrait of Barany. Nearly the same background is used with Charles Richet, Nobel Prize for physiology and

medicine in 1913 in another 5 stamp series published at the same time. This means that the background was simply related to medicine and not to Barany's work. This Barany stamp is presented in a bloc with two other Nobel Prize winners Theodore William Richards and Max von Laue (Figure 18) with its corresponding FDC (Figure 19).



Fig. 18. Barany Guinea-Bissau bloc



Fig. 19. Barany FDC Guinea-Bissau bloc



Fig. 20. Barany 2012 cinderella stamp (Zanzibar)

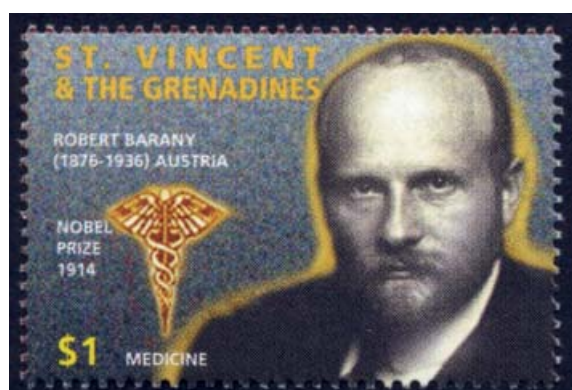


Fig. 21. Barany stamp issued in 2014 in St. Vincent & The Grenadines

In 2012 a series of Cinderella stamps dedicated to some Jewish Noble laureate in physiology or medicine under the unofficial country Zanzibar (Tanzania) were produced, one of which concerned Barany (Figure 20). A Cinderella stamp is virtually anything resembling a postage stamp, but not issued for postal purposes by a government postal administration<sup>(15)</sup>. It is produced in very short series by collectors, and is quite rare on the market.

Finally in 2014, for the 100th anniversary of 1914 Nobel Prize winners, the Island of St. Vincent & the Grenadines issued a complete series of stamps, one being in memory of Barany (Figure 21). It represents his portrait, referring to the Nobel's

collection portrait, with the stylized emblem of the God of medicine Asclepius serpent-entwined staff. No mention of the designer is found. This stamp is usually found in one larger bloc composed of 11 other Nobel Prize winners' stamps (Figure 22). On the official FDC this bloc is presented without being accompanied with a cachet, certainly due to the lack of place.

#### COVER LETTERS

In 2014, someone in Romania produced at least one special postal cover dedicated to Barany. Two different ones were found (Figure 23, p.155). It is

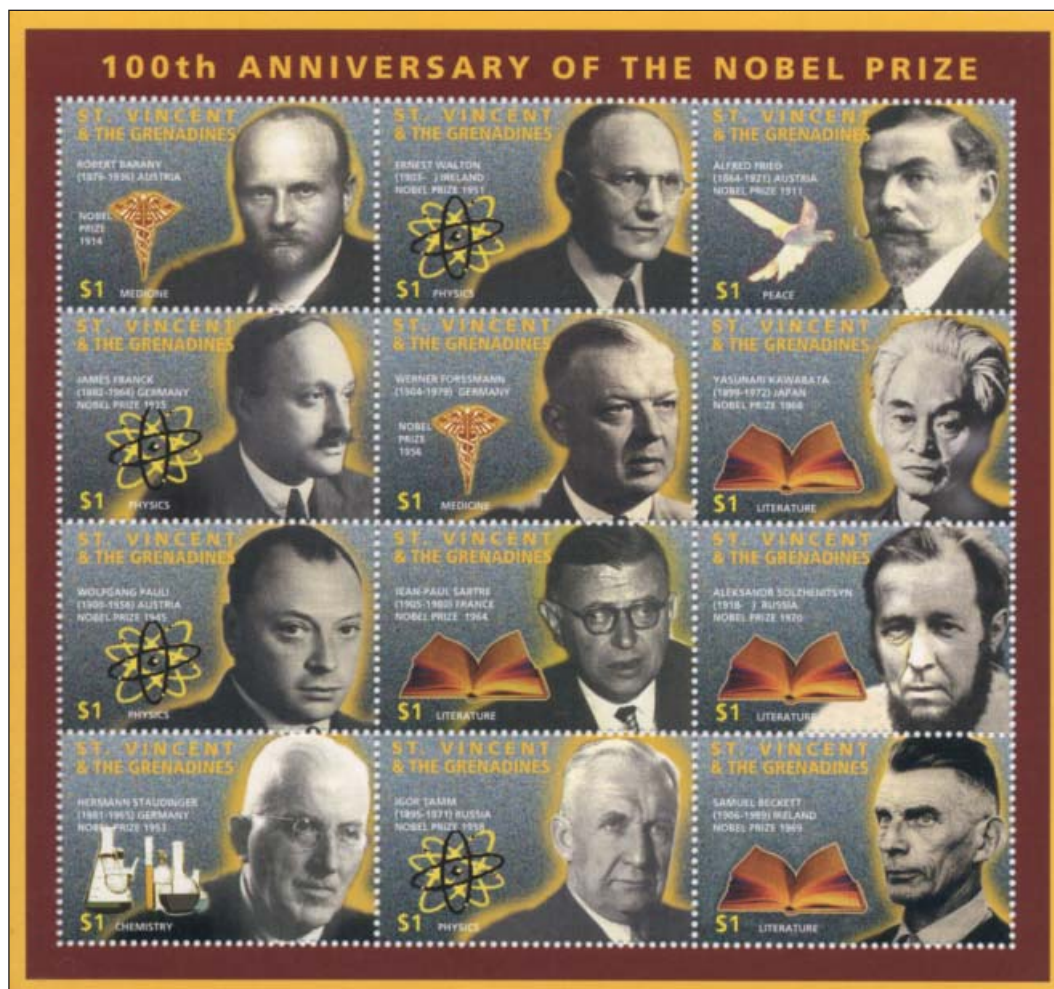


Fig. 22. Barany St. Vincent & The Grenadines bloc

impossible to know if all of the set was found, because these covers are not mentioned in the usual collections of stamps. In 2015, Juan Borderia Tormo at Torrevieja in Spain, better known as Jubortorspain1950SL, privately produced at least six different cover letters related to Barany (Figure 24, p.156). They are pre-franked and issued by the Spanish postal service. They can be used only in Spain. Surprisingly, a cover letter was issued in 2005 in Romania to commemorate Philipp Eduard Anton von Lenard (1862-1947) the Nobel Prize winner in physics in 1905 with the portrait of Barany and a Barany's printmark (Figure 25).

## COINS

In 2014, Hungary produced two coins with the portrait of Barany, one 2000 and one 5000 Forint. They referred to the same portrait as that on the Guiné-Bissau stamp (Figure 26). The same year, Austria with its (Die begehrte Aurum Austriae Kollektion [The coveted gold Austrian collection]) produced a gold coin "100 years of Nobel Prize for medicine – Robert Barany – 1914" (Figure 27, p.158).



Fig. 23. Barany Romania 2014 cover letter



Fig. 24. Barany Spain 2015 cover letter

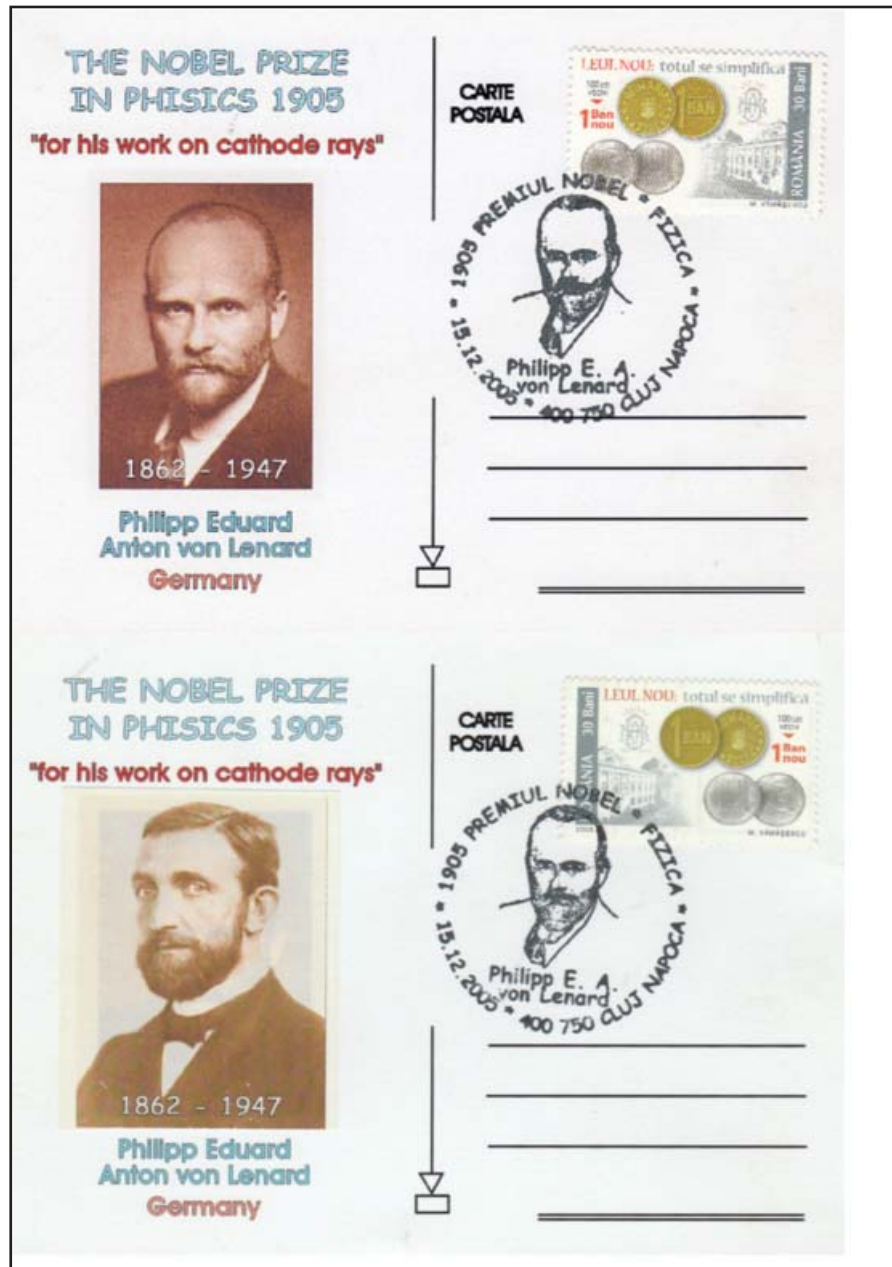


Fig. 25. Cover letter Philipp Eduard Anton von Lenard issued in Romania in 2005

### Stylized perceptual portraits

In 2011, Nicholas Wade produced a stylized perceptual portrait “Barany’s chair”. A perceptual portrait consists generally of two elements: the portrait and some appropriate motif. The nature of the latter depends upon the endeavors for which the portrayed person was known. In the case of Barany,

it was derived from his famous rotating chair (Figure 28). The portrait, referring to the Nobel’s collection portrait, and the motif has itself been manipulated in a variety of ways, using graphical, photographic, and computerized graphical procedures<sup>(16)</sup>. “Barany is shown in an illustration of the rotating chair and bed devised by William Saunders Hallaran (ca. 1765-1825) for treatment of



Fig. 26. Barany Hungarian coin



Fig. 27. Barany Austrian coin

his patients in the Lunatic Asylum of Cork.”<sup>(17)</sup> One year later, Nicholas Wade produced a second stylized perceptual representation of the Barany Jubilee Medal with the portrait of the Australian researcher Ian Curthoys who received the Barany Jubilee Medal for his work. Nicholas Wade depicted the reverse side of the medal with Ian Curthoys’ portrait (Figure 29).



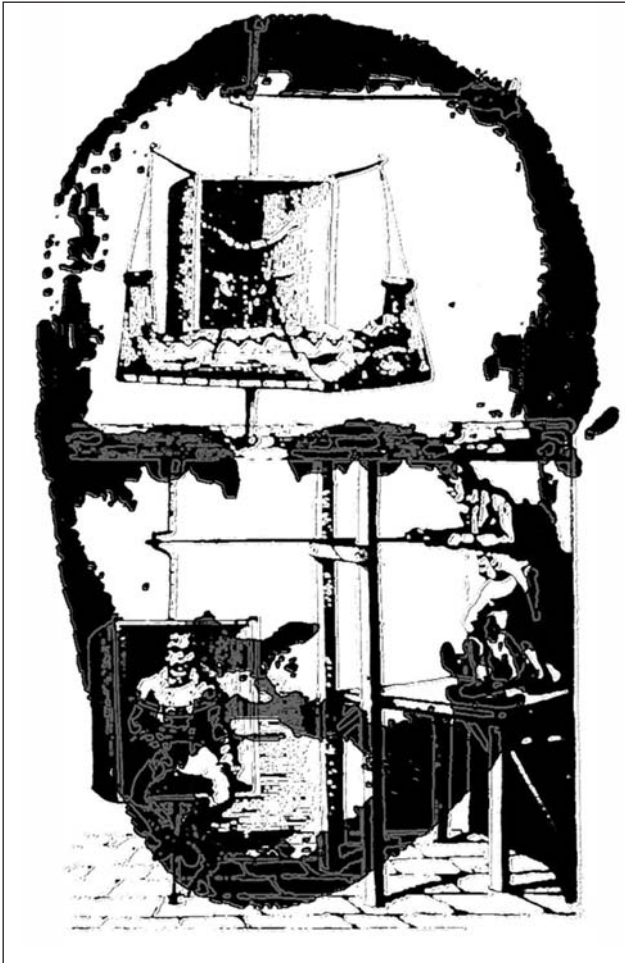


Fig. 28. Barany Wade Stylized portrait

## STREETS

In 1962, a street in Vienna was named Baranygasse<sup>(18)</sup> (Figure 30). In the early 1990s, the city of Stockerau (north of Vienna) created a new settlement area with new streets. In the municipal council meeting on 15 December 1993 these new streets received the name of some Nobel Prize winners. Barany was one of them (Figure 31). Exactly speaking he has nothing to do with Stockerau and he was probably never there. Nevertheless his name was attributed to one of these streets in remembrance of him.



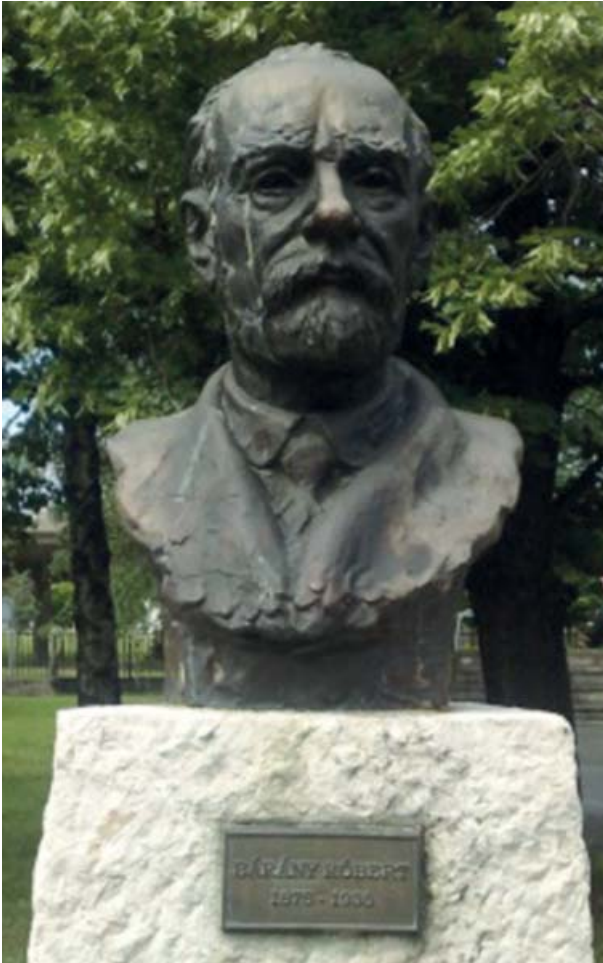
Fig. 30. Baranygasse in Vienna



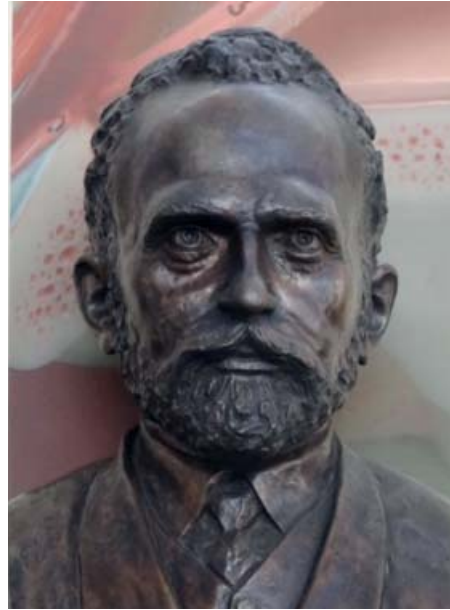
Fig. 31. Robert-Barany Strasse in Stockerau



Fig. 29. Barany medal Wade Stylized portrait



*Fig. 32. Barany bust at Eger*



*Fig. 33. Barany bust presented in 2006 in Budapest*

## **BUSTS**

In 2000 a commemorative park named Szoborpark was opened by Középiskola és Kollegium at Eger, Hungary. It contains 14 busts of Hungarian Nobel Prize winners made by the sculptor Jozseph Kampfl. Barany is one of them (Figure 32). In a 2006 exhibition another bust of Barany (Figure 33) was presented in Budapest. Its actual localization is unknown.

## CARDS AND OTHER ITEMS

In China, two different postage cards were found (Figure 34a+b) the first one edited in 2009 and the second one in 2011. Furthermore a playing card (Figure 35) was also discovered, most certainly belonging to a set of cards of various Nobel Prize winners, without precision of its origin. Two stickers of unknown origin were also found (Figure 36). In the Aula of Building B of Veszprém campus of Pannonia University in Hungary, a plaque listing 12 Hungarian Nobel Prize winners is mounted on the wall. Barany is mentioned on this plaque (Figure 37). The date of presentation was not found. In 2015, a biographical film of Barany was presented at Budapest (Figure 38).

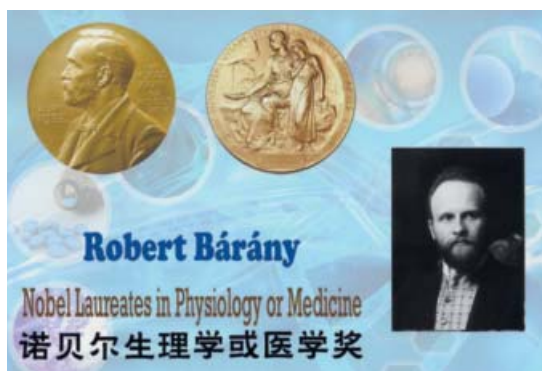
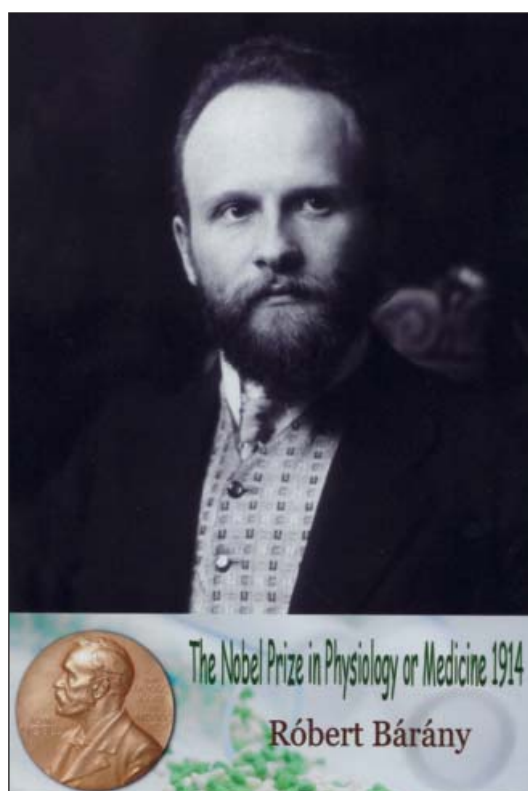


Fig. 34a+b. Barany  
Above: 2 postage cards issued in China

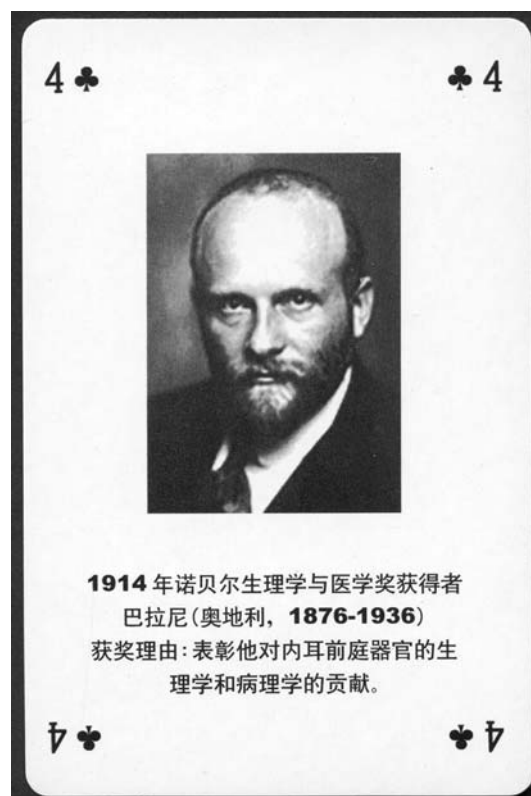
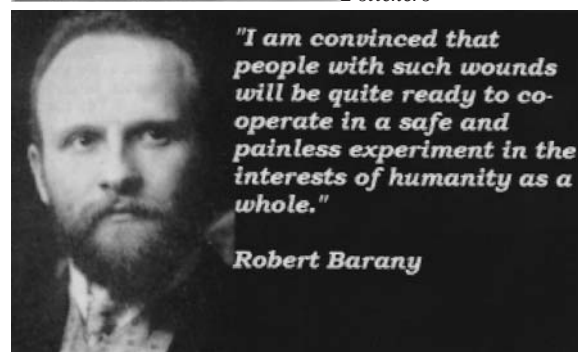


Fig. 35. Barany play card from China



Fig. 36. Barany  
2 stickers



MAGYAR NOBEL-DÍJASOK		KERTÉSZ IMRE 2002	
LÉNÁRD FÜLÖP	1905		
BÁRÁNY RÓBERT	1914		
ZSIGMONDY RICHÁRD	1925		
SZENT-GYÖRGYI ALBERT	1937		
HEVESY GYÖRGY	1943		
BÉKÉSY GYÖRGY	1961		
WIGNER JENŐ	1963		
GÁBOR DENES	1971		
POLÁNYI JÁNOS	1986		
WIESEL ELIE	1986		
HARSÁNYI JÁNOS	1994		
OLÁH GYÖRGY	1994		

Fig. 37. Barany memorial tablet at Pannonia University

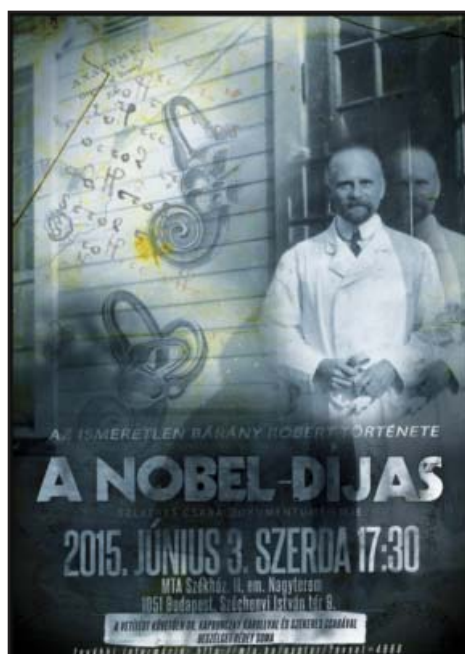


Fig. 38. Barany film poster

## CONCLUSION

This study allows one to demonstrate that Barany's memory is still alive in the first part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century not only within medical circles but also for the greater public. Hungary regularly celebrates him with different commemorative marks. Even if they are most certainly incomplete, these different memorial marks support this affirmation.

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