

Robert Griffith

Born: 1663
President: 1705-1706, 1711-1712
Died: 1719

Robert Griffith was born in Ince in Cheshire in 1663. He entered Trinity College Dublin in 1684 aged 21. This was rather an advanced age to start university in the seventeenth century but as his name also appears in the register of Oxford Alumni it is likely he attended there first. He received his MA from Trinity in 1693, his MD in 1699 and was incorporated MD in Oxford in 1712. Griffith was elected a Fellow of the College of Physicians in 1700 and elected President, for the first time, five years later.

Griffith was appointed the first Lecturer in Chemistry in the School of Physic of Trinity in 1711 and spoke at its inauguration on 16 August 1711. He is credited as establishing the study of chemistry in Trinity using the laboratory provided in the first medical school building which was constructed where the Berkeley Library now stands. In August 1717 he was chosen as the first Professor of the Practice of Medicine in Trinity by a committee whose members included Thomas Molyneux (qv) and Richard Helsham (qv). The post was established by the College of Physicians at the bequest of Sir Patrick Dun (qv) subject to a charter granted by King George I in 1715. The chair was supposed to be funded by an endowment granted by Dun who died in 1713. However, Dun's will specified that the funding would not become available until the death of Lady Dun which did not happen until 1748. Thus, Griffith was consequently unpaid but also not required to fulfil all the duties of the professorship. Griffith died in 1719 and was succeeded as King's Professor by James Grattan (qv).

We know reasonably little about Griffith beyond these details. He was likely a good friend of Richard Steevens (qv) as he was appointed a trustee of his property in his will and was appointed one of the original trustees of Dr Steevens' Hospital. There are no contemporary records of any marriage or offspring.

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