

Thomas Madden

Born: 1691
President: 1731-1732
Died: 1734

Thomas Madden was born in Dublin in 1691. His father was probably John Madden (qv), who had been elected a Fellow of the College of Physicians in 1684. Thomas was educated in Major Wales's school and his tutor was Robert Howard. Madden entered Trinity College Dublin as a pensioner in 1706 at the age of 15; at the time, most students entered Trinity as pensioners paying a fixed sum annually. He obtained the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1711.

Minutes of the College of Physicians from 2 February 1715 note that Mr Thomas Madden, Bachelor of Arts, was examined and a certificate given him of his 'being duly qualified to perform his acts for his Bachelor of Physick's degree'.¹ He was studying medicine in Leyden in 1716, but was back in Dublin in July 1720 when the Trinity College Dublin Board minutes note 'the grace of the House was given to Thomas Madden for the Degree of Doctor in Physick'.² He was admitted a Candidate of the College of Physicians in 1721, and elected Fellow on 18 October 1728. The Board of Trinity College, in October 1730, appointed him as Lecturer in Anatomy.

During the early decades of the College of Physicians' existence, the College's private funds were used for the relief of needy physicians, surgeons and their dependents. Money was also lent to the Fellows. Thomas Madden applied in April 1729 for a loan of £150; it was granted 'on condition that the said Dr Madden and his brother the Rev Dr John Madden do perfect a bond to the President for the said sum'.³

Thomas Madden was elected President of the College of Physicians in 1731. In June of the following year it was ordered that the President and three others be appointed to consider what should be done in regard to the practice of the Popish physicians in Dublin. Among other items noted in the minutes during his presidency was the ongoing dispute with Mary Dun over

¹ RCPI Journal, 2 February 1715, RCPI/2/1/1/1

² Thomas Madden, Kirkpatrick Index Card.

³ RCPI Journal, April 1729, RCPI/2/1/1/2



the estate of her late husband Sir Patrick Dun (qv), and the granting to Mrs. Catherine Banford of the first licence to practice midwifery.

Little is known of Madden's clinical practice. However, a letter from T Madden MD of Dublin to Cromwell Mortimer MD, Royal Society Secretary, has survived which gives an account of two women being poisoned by the simple distilled water of laurel leaves and of several experiments upon dogs, by which it appears that this laurel water is one of the most dangerous poisons hitherto known.⁴ However, the true nature of this poison was not understood until pointed out by Schroder in 1803.

On Wednesday, 15 May 1734 Thomas Madden died of a fever at his house in Aungier Street.

TC

⁴ 'VII. A letter from T Madden MD of Dublin', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 1731, 37, 84-100

