

William Arthur Winter

Born: 1868
President: 1927-1930
Died: 1935

Have you ever wondered how the room in Number 6 Kildare Street came to be known as the Winter Hall? No, it's not because it's the coldest room in the building! It's named after William Arthur Winter, a physician born in Dublin in 1868, the son of Richard Winter. It is possible he was also descended from Arthur Winter, surgeon to the Meath Hospital in the late 1700s.

After attending the Rathmines School from 1881 to 1886, William Winter entered Trinity College and was attached to Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital from 1887 until he graduated in medicine in 1891. He had obtained his BA in 1890, gained the Diploma in Public Health from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons in Edinburgh in 1893 and was awarded MD in 1895.

Winter was admitted as a Licentiate of the College of Physicians in 1898, became a Member in 1900 and a Fellow in 1901. He served as a College Censor from 1910 to 1912, was Vice President from 1924 to 1925, and President from 1927 to 1930.

Early in his career (1893-1895) Winter worked as a medical officer in the Stockton-on-Tees Union and Workhouse before returning to work in Dublin. He was X-rayist (radiologist) in the Royal City of Dublin Hospital, Baggot Street from 1900 until 1904 when he was appointed Assistant Physician in Dr Steevens' Hospital. He was appointed Physician there in 1909, a post he held for the remainder of his life. During the First World War, Winter served as a Major in the Royal Army Medical Corps, and was stationed at the 83 General Hospital in Boulogne, France from 1916.

In addition to his 'careful and conscientious' work, on an honorary basis, as Visiting Physician to Dr Steevens' Hospital, Winter was described as a physician with a large private practice 'chiefly of the family type'.¹ He also served as a physician to institutions such as the Convalescent Home in Stillorgan and the Old Men's Home in Northbrook Road. He left bequests to Dr Steevens' Hospital and to those other mentioned institutions. It is also likely he provided care in other charitable organisations; several sent wreaths for his funeral and he allocated funds in his will to institutions such as the Rest for the Dying, Camden Row; the Molyneux Asylum for Female Blind, Leeson Park and the Masonic Orphan Boys' School, Richview, Clonskea. In this way, he continued

¹ Edward Martin, *A dictionary of bookplates of Irish Medical Doctors with short biographies* (Dublin: De Burca, 2003), 114



his service to the poorest and most vulnerable in society which he started in Stockton-on-Tees at the beginning of his medical career.

His obituary in the *British Medical Journal* stated that he 'did not write much on medical matters'.² However, he was an active member of the Royal Academy of Medicine, including serving on the Council of the Section of Medicine (1904-1927). From 1903 to 1905 he was also a Member of the Council of the Section of State Medicine (now Epidemiology and Public Health) which had been founded in 1882. He was Secretary to that Section from 1905 to 1915, President from 1915 to 1917 and a Member of the Council from 1919 to 1926. Abstracts of his presentations, as well as 'exhibits' and contributions to discussions, were published in the *Dublin Journal of Medical Science*, on topics such as enteric fever, syphilis, meningitis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and the education of 'physically defective' children.

His obituary in *The Lancet* indicated surprise that Winter had performed so well as President of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. 'He was so unassuming that his capacity and dignity as President of the College exceeded the anticipations even of his friends. Only a few weeks ago he proposed the toast of the guests at the St Luke's Day dinner with neatness, good feeling, and tact. A very 'clubbable' man and a bachelor he was held in general affection, his courtesy and willingness to do a favour being patent to all.'³ In addition to professional and social engagements, Winter was also a keen fisherman.

After his sudden death in the study of his home, 17 Fitzwilliam Place, in November 1935 at the age of 67, the *Irish Times* reported on the large and representative attendance at Winter's funeral. In addition to his brother and two cousins, the mourners were led by the then President of the College, J A Matson (qv) 'accompanied by the Mace Bearer'. Among the many wreaths was one from his household staff - 'Chauffeur and Family, and Housemaid and Cook'.⁴

Winter's bequest of £1000 to the College of Physicians was used to convert the vaults underneath the College. Prior to the reclamation, 'the vaults were festooned with cob-webs, and black with soot and were the happy hunting ground of innumerable rats'.⁵ Originally restored and opened in 1940 as an extension of the library, today the Winter Hall is used for educational workshops and meetings.

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² 'Obituary W A Winter', *British Medical Journal*, 16 November 1935

³ 'Obituary: W A Winter', *The Lancet*, 9 November 1935

⁴ 'Obituary Dr W A Winter', *The Irish Times*, 7 November 1935

⁵ J D H Widdess, *A history of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland* (Edinburgh: E & S Livingston, 1963), 217

