

Henry Cope

Born: 1686
President: 1728-1729, 1740-1741
Died: 1743

Henry Cope, the son of Anthony Cope DD, was born at Abbey Boyle in 1686. He entered Trinity College on 24 December 1701. There is no record of him graduating from Trinity around this time; however, he is noted as a student at the University of Leiden in 1708, from which he subsequently graduated MD. It was a well-recognised pathway for Irish medical students at the time to seek their medical training from continental universities. By doing so they benefitted from clinical bedside teaching rather than following a purely lecture-based course divorced from patient contact as in Dublin. Cope eventually returned to Ireland and he then appears to have graduated MB and MD from Trinity in 1718. He was shortly thereafter admitted a Candidate by the College of Physicians on St Luke's Day of the same year. In 1723 he was unanimously elected as a Fellow of the College. He served two terms as President of the College in 1728 and 1740.

While there is little definite evidence about his career development in Dublin, he must have been highly regarded, for when Sir Thomas Molyneux (qv) died he was named as his successor as State Physician in 1733. In the same year he was also elected a Governor and one of the physicians to Dr Steevens' Hospital. Cope acted as Visiting Physician to Dr Steevens' in 1734 but beyond the fact that he drew a salary there is no other record of his work. Clearly to occupy such an important position he must have been an outstanding physician and been highly regarded by the authorities. In 1738 Cope succeeded Richard Helsham (qv) as Professor of Physic at Trinity College. He was reputed to have had an extensive medical practice in the city of Dublin. He published a book of commentaries on some of the Aphorisms of Hippocrates as well as a pamphlet entitled '*Medicina Vindicata; Or Reflections on Bleeding or Purging in the beginning of Fevers, Small pox, Pleurises and other Active Diseases*'. While this pamphlet was published anonymously in 1837 its authorship by him was referred to in a copy of the pamphlet now held in the Worth Library Collection.

Socially at the very height of his medical career he had to cope with a family crisis involving his wayward daughter. She appears to have eloped and the details are graphically recorded for posterity in correspondence between Swift and Sheraton. Swift says in a letter dated 15 June 1735 'Here have been five and forty devils to do about Dr Cope's daughter who ran away with a rogue, one Gibson and the Doctor caught them in a field with a hedge parson in the act of coupling.'¹ To which Sheraton responds 'Dr Cope was a fool to trouble himself about his rampant

¹ F. Elrington Ball, edit., *The correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D.D.* (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1913), 194.



daughter; for he may be assured though he secures her from the present lover, since the love fit is upon her she will try either his butler or his coachman.'²

Henry Cope died at his home in William Street on 22 June 1743.

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² Ball, *The correspondence*, 199.

