

Henry Quin

Born: 1717

President: 1758-1759, 1766-1767, 1771-1772, 1774-1775, 20 Sep 1779-1780, 1781-1782

Died: 1791

Among physicians practicing during the latter half of the eighteenth century, no one was better known, or more generally respected, than Henry Quin. His father, Thomas Quin, was an apothecary and a leading figure in the Apothecaries' Guild of St Luke and he was one of the signatories to the inaugural minutes of the Guild on 23 April 1747.

Henry Quin was born in 1717 and was educated at the school of the Rev L Henry Young in Dublin which had an excellent reputation. Quin entered Trinity College aged 16 and graduated BA in 1737. There is no record of where or when he commenced the study of medicine, but in January 1743 he was examined by the College, and the same year he received his MB from Trinity. Quin seems to have left Dublin again at this point, returning in 1749 with an MD from the University of Padua. In 1749, he was examined as a Candidate for the King's Professorship of Physic. The examiner's report stated:

'that according to the best of our respective judgement and understanding the said Doctor Henry Quin is of good learning, skill, knowledge and ability in the several parts of physic, and we do report him, the said Doctor Henry Quin, to be the most fit and best qualified person among the said candidates to be the King's Professor of Physic in the City of Dublin.'¹

Quin's duties as King's Professor do not seem to have occupied much of his time, doubtless due to the small number of students attending Trinity. His role as King's Professor was, however, celebrated in poetry by the physician and poet John Gilborne:

'Ingenious Quin, with erudition great,
Averts the blows of unrelenting fate;
He teaches youth the cure, the remedies,
And various causes of all maladies;
The speculative theoretic rule,
And the best practice, in the physic school'²

¹ Quoted in T Percy C Kirkpatrick, *Henry Quin, MD, President and Fellow of the King and Queen's College of Physicians in Ireland and King's Professor of the Practice of Physic (1718-1791)* (Dublin: University Press, 1919), 24.

² John Gilborne, *The medical review, a poem being a panegyric on the faculty of Dublin; physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries, marching in procession to the temple of fame* (Dublin: J A Husbard, 1775), 17.



Almost immediately after his appointment as King's Professor, Quin entered on a fashionable and lucrative practice in Dublin. He moved in the highest circles of Dublin society and made an advantageous marriage to Anne Monck in 1753. His wife was related to the family of the Duke of Portland and brought a large income to the marriage.

Within the College, Quin was elected a Fellow in 1754 and he held successively the posts of Registrar, Censor and Treasurer. He was elected President on six occasions. For many years he also held the post of Inspector of Apothecaries Shops within the College.

Outside of medicine, Quin had many interests. He was an accomplished musician, playing the harpsichord on an amateur basis as part of Lord Mornington's Musical Academy. While a student in Italy, Quin had begun collecting ancient gems and cameos. Once settled in Dublin he set up a laboratory to experiment in reproducing the gems. Quin employed a Scot, James Tassie, as his assistant and together they designed a new method for producing the gems. Quin recognised Tassie's talent, and encouraged him to move to London to further his career. Tassie's gems were in great demand, and were collected by Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia amongst others. Quin was also a patron and friend to another outstanding craftsman, William Mossop. Quin helped Mossop develop his skills in the casting and striking of medallions. Mossop's medallion of Quin bears the inscription:

'The human frame is, Quin, thy debtor,
None but its Maker knows it better'

Through his practice, and by marriage, Quin acquired a considerable fortune, and died a wealthy man in 1791. He lived well, had expensive hobbies and entertained his friends in a princely manner at his homes in Dublin and at Borleigh in County Wexford. He was a liberal patron of the arts and a wise and beloved physician, winning the respect and affection of his contemporaries. He was survived by three sons and three daughters, with one son, Charles William Quin (qv), following his father into medicine.

