

Thomas Wrigley Grimshaw

Born: 1839
President: 1895-1896
Died: 1900

Thomas Wrigley Grimshaw was born on 16 November 1839 in County Antrim. His family had moved from Lancashire some years previously and established the calico printing industry in Ireland. He was educated at Bryce's Academy in Newry, Carrickfergus School in County Antrim, The Academic Institute in Harcourt Street in Dublin and Dr Hares' School in Stephen's Green, Dublin.

He entered Trinity College Dublin in 1856 and became a moderator in experimental and natural science and a Briggs exhibitioner. Graduating BA in 1860 and Bachelor of Surgery and Medicine in 1861 he was admitted to the Licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland in 1862. He underwent further training at Sir Patrick Dun's and Dr Steevens' Hospitals where he was appointed Professor of Botany in 1862, advancing to Professor of Materia Medica at Dr Steevens' Hospital in 1865. He graduated MD from Trinity in 1867 and became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland in 1869.

He won a moderatorship in experimental natural science and various honours in chemistry and botany at Trinity. He was appointed Consulting Physician at Cork Street Fever Hospital, the Coombe Lying-In Hospital and the Dublin Orthopaedic Hospital and was also Physician to Dr Steevens' Hospital. In 1873 he was awarded a Diploma in State Medicine by Trinity and acquitted himself so well in his examinations that he was granted an honorary MA the following year.

His recommendation that Dr Steevens' Hospital establish a nursing school was accepted in 1878. He had a particular interest in public health, was a recognised authority on medical statistics and published extensively in this area making some very important contributions concerning the distribution of infectious diseases throughout the country. He was appointed Registrar General of Ireland in 1879. In 1881, having resigned from his medical post, he became a governor of Dr Steevens' Hospital. He made many improvements to the methodology of producing government reports once he became Registrar General and was responsible for the modified layout of the 1881 Irish census.

He also made many major contributions concerning patterns of migration and specifically addressed his attention to the problem of tuberculosis and other diseases of the respiratory tract. He diverted attention from the zymotic diseases which greatly interested his colleagues at this



time. He was a pioneer in insisting on treating infectious disorders with general standards of cleanliness, the admission of air and light both in the home and in the workplace and the destruction of contagious material. He became engaged in a controversy concerning the compulsory notification of tuberculosis publishing extensively in the area. This led to the establishment of two Royal Commissions to enquire into administrative procedures for controlling danger to man resulting from the use of meat and milk of tuberculous animals as food. He was a major advocate on the reliability of the tuberculin test in identifying infected animals in dairy herds.

He became President of the Statistical Society of Ireland in 1888 and President of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland in 1895; and in 1897 he was awarded the CBE for his services to medicine.

He died in 1900 at his home in Carrickmines County Dublin, and was survived by his wife Sarah Elizabeth Thomas and 12 children. One of his sons, Major Cecil Wrigley Grimshaw CB, DSO of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was killed in action at Gallipoli.

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