

Thomas Kingsbury

Born: 1688
President: 1736-1737, 1744-1745
Died: 1747

Thomas Kingsbury is included in Gilbert's *History of Dublin* (1861) as:

'Thomas Kingsbury, M.D., President of the Irish College of Physicians in 1744, resided in Anglesey Street. Dr Kingsbury was one of the medical attendants of Dean Swift, who, while in his company in the Phoenix Park, produced impromptu his last well-known lines on the erection of the Powder Magazine in that locality'.¹

In fact, Kingsbury was twice elected President of the College first in 1736 and again in 1744. Records show he was admitted as a Candidate on 6 November 1721, and elected Fellow on 29 April 1734. Although few records survive to support his connection to the celebrated satirist and author of *Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift, this is often mentioned by Swift's biographers. Undoubtedly, they moved in the same circles and were connected through their charitable works.

Genealogical studies tell us that Kingsbury was 'son of Thomas Kingsbury, Esq. descended from County Dorset'.² The Arms Entry for 'Dr. Thomas Kingsbury, Fellow of the College of Physicians of Ireland, Aug. 7, 1742', held in the National Library of Ireland, describes him as 'Son of Tho^s Kingsbury of an Ancient family of Dorsetshire In Great Britain'.³

Records held in the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland archive suggest that Kingsbury was born in 1688 near Armagh. He appears on page 266 of the Entrance Book for Trinity College Dublin as Thomas Kingsberry and is recorded as entering the university, aged twenty, on 1 June 1708. Previously, he had attended school in Armagh where his tutor was Mr Martin, probably Richard Martin, schoolmaster of the Free School of Armagh. He was granted a scholarship in 1711, attained a BA in 1712, an MB in 1719, and an MD in 1721.

On 21 October 1725, Kingsbury married Esther Punter in St. Andrew's Church. They had four children: Mary (b.1726), Thomas (b.1730), Elizabeth (b.1733) and Hester (b.1736). The Kingsburys were a well-to-do family. Kingsbury appears in the Dublin Directory of 1738 as

¹ Sir John Gilbert, *History of Dublin* (Dublin: Joseph Dollard, 1903) 266-7

² Frederick John Kingsbury, *The genealogy of the descendants of Henry Kingsbury of Ipswich and Haverhill, Mass* (Hartford Press, 1905), 21

³ National Library of Ireland, Genealogical Office: Ms.103, 50



Physician, Censor living on Anglesey Street. Under the terms of his will, his widow assigned '4 houses in College Green 70ft frontage, great house in Anglesey St backing it as payment of £1,300' to Edward Croaker, apothecary and 'Chemist to the University of Dublin'. This property represented the 'personal fortune' of his daughter Mary Kingsbury.⁴

A New Anatomy of Ireland (2004) records that:

'Kingsbury, practicing in George II's Dublin, typified the style and habits of a prosperous practitioner. He assembled a library, ran a spanking new equipage, and adopted the latest in dress, wigs, books and furnishings.'

Also, that Kingsbury 'kept a coach and a carriage and was a discerning judge of what was modish in architecture and interior design'.⁵ All this was possible because he charged well for his ministering; he received 'a fee of £120 and all his expenses for attending Lord Charlemont at Kilkenny over twelve days in 1743'.⁶ Reverend Edward Murphy mentions Kingsbury in a letter to Charlemont, dated 4 April 1747. He also attended the Edgeworth family in Edgeworthstown, County Longford.

On 14 April 1747, *Pue's Occurrences* reported the death of Thomas Kingsbury:

'Friday last [10 April 1747] died of the gout in his stomach Thomas KINGSBURY Esq. a very eminent physician whose great compassion for the poor makes his death justly lamented.'⁷

He had been ill for some time. In February 1741, he informed Price that he had suffered with gout for a fortnight. In November 1743, he admitted to having suffered 'a severe fit of the gout'.⁸ Ironically, it seems he refused to take the advice of his own doctors which was understandable really considering that on one occasion he was 'blistered from head to foot' in an attempt to save his life.⁹ Afterwards, Kingsbury's impressive library was sold in Dick's Coffee House in Skinner's Row to 'pay pressing expenses'.¹⁰

An interesting family connection is that Kingsbury was great, great grandfather to Oscar Wilde on his maternal side. Wilde's mother, Jane Wilde, née Elgee, was the daughter of Sarah Elgee,

⁴ *Vickers' Index to the Prerogative wills of Ireland, 1536-1810* (Dublin: Edward Ponsonby, 1897), 270, 446.

⁵ Toby Christopher Barnard, *A New Anatomy of Ireland: The Irish Protestants, 1649-1770*. (Yale: Yale University Press, 2004) 133

⁶ Barnard, *A New Anatomy of Ireland*, 133

⁷ From Nick Reddan's Newspaper Extracts http://members.iinet.net.au/~nickred/newspaper/np_abst32.htm accessed on 15 June 2017

⁸ National Library of Ireland, Microfilm: n.3645, p.3263.

⁹ Quoted in Catherine Cox and Maria Luddy (ed), *Cultures of Care in Irish Medical History, 1750-1970*, (AIAA; 2010), 23, 26

¹⁰ *Irish Builder & Engineer*. Volume 38, 70



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née Kingsbury, whose father was also Thomas Kingsbury, Vicar of Kildare and Commissioner of Bankruptcy, son and heir of Thomas Kingsbury.

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