

THE STUDY

Dr James Beaney



Dr James Beaney

Diamond Jim or Gentleman Jim?

From humble beginnings, in Canterbury, James Beaney (1828-91) travelled and made his fortune in Australia, working as a surgeon and becoming a flamboyant character in Melbourne society. He never forgot his roots and when he died left money to Canterbury to build a Working Men's Institute. This was used to re-house Canterbury Museum and Library in 1899. In 2012 it became The Beaney.

Biography

Early years and training

Born to a labourer and servant, George and Sarah Beney, James George, who spelled his surname Beaney, was apprenticed to local chemists before becoming articled to the surgeon, apothecary and chemist, William James Cooper (1801-1880), brother of the famous cattle-painter, Thomas Sidney Cooper. Beaney studied medicine and qualified in 1855. With his wife Susannah he emigrated to Australia in 1857, becoming Honorary Surgeon at the Melbourne Hospital.



Dr James George Beaney FRCSE, 1880-85, by William Bardwell (active 1858-95), courtesy of the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia



James G. Beaney Esq, FRCS, Surgeon to the Melbourne Hospital, about 1855, engraving by Henry Samuel Sadd (?1811-93), image courtesy of the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia

Work in Australia

There was no National Health Service and people had to pay for medical treatment. Beaney became very rich. His fondness for showy jewellery, worn even when operating, earned him the nickname 'Diamond Jim'. He was 'a bold surgeon' and pioneer of Australian child health, family planning and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. But he was a flamboyant self-promoter and shunned by the medical profession. Controversies included four inquests on patients who died after



surgery. One led to Beaney's trial and acquittal for the murder of barmaid Mary Lewis, who died after an alleged illegal abortion.

Bequest

Beaney was generous to charities. He left money in his will to Melbourne Hospital, and to Canterbury for building a Working Men's Institute.

The Hon James George Beaney, MP MD MRIA, Surgeon, Prince of Wales Regiment of Hussars, about 1865, engraving by Henry Samuel Sadd (?1811-93), image courtesy of the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne



Items on display



Dr James George Beaney

1886

P Bionda (active as an artist 1880s)

Oil on canvas

This portrait of Dr Beaney is based on a photograph by [check], which was reproduced as an engraving. It is probable that the photograph was projected onto the canvas using a similar projector to that used for lantern slides: there is furniture visible below the paint on the left and right of the painting that matches the photograph and print, and would have been sketched in from the photograph then overpainted. The face is painted in more detail than the costume and background, and differs from the photograph. This suggests that the face was painted from life. Bionda may have had assistants to paint the costume and background as the handling of these is different to the finer painting of the face.

Little is known about Bionda but he also painted other portraits in Melbourne, including that of J. S. Butters (1832-1912), a gold broker and politician, who was mayor of Melbourne in 1867. Butters commissioned the portrait of his friend Dr Beaney, who was godfather to his daughter Irene, born in 1884 and whose middle name was Beaney. The portrait was presented to Dr Beaney on behalf of Irene Butters at the Athenaeum Hall in Melbourne on Monday 11 February 1886. At that time Bionda's portrait of Butters was hanging in the Town Hall.

Information on Bionda and Butters from Alan Barber, 2012
Bequeathed by Dr James George Beaney, 1891
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 3089





Ink stand

Silver

.....
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference ?(nn)



Miniatures of military medals

.....
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference (nn)



Melbourne Hospital commemorative medals

.....
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference (nn)



Trowel presented on laying of Beaney Institute foundation stone

1897

Silver

.....
Trowel presented to the Mayor of Canterbury, George Collard, on his laying the foundation stone of the Beaney Institute in 1897.

.....
Presented by Miss D Collard, niece of George Collard, 1975
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 9955.1



Key to the Beaney Institute

1899

Gold

.....
Key with which the Beaney Institute was formally opened on 11 September 1899, with city arms, presented to George Collard, Mayor of Canterbury, by Henry Bell Wilson, builder of the Beaney Institute.

.....
Canterbury Museums and Galleries reference 8108



Time line for James George Beaney (1828-91)

Also notes about his family & relatives

By Alan Barber

- 1825 George Beney (sic) labourer &/or sawyer (son of George & Grace Beney baptised Sturry 12 August 1804) married (by banns) Sarah Snoad, servant (daughter of William & Sarah Snoad baptised Bapchild 11 August 1793) at Holy Cross, Westgate, Canterbury on 18 April 1825. Note Sarah had 3 illegitimate children whilst in service in Westbere - Jemima born c 1815, William born & died 1818 and Mary Ann born 1820
- 1826 Birth of George Beney (junior) baptised 18 March St Mary Northgate, family living in Northgate St.
- 1828 Birth of James George Beney baptised 13 July (Cathedral Memorial has dob 15 Jan –but not verified)
- 1830 Burial of George Beney (senior) sawyer aged 26 at St Mary's Burial ground 17 August
- 1831 Birth of Sarah Beney (junior) baptised 20 February at St Alphege (St Mary Northgate being rebuilt)
- 1835 Burial of Sarah Beney (junior) aged 5 at St Mary Northgate on 4December
- c1836 Received 'preliminary education' school not named - maybe St Dunstan's National School (register of boys lost but girl cousin listed). 'He evinced a desire to join the ranks of the medical profession'.
- 1837 Jemima Snoad married John Joiner 13 August at St Mary Northgate. Harriott Joiner baptised 3Dec
- 1841 Census has James Veney (13) (AB corrected to Beney) living in Cross St (St Gregory's - later Union Place) with mother Sarah (45) shoe-binder, George (14) Mary Snoad (20) and Elizabeth Wail (4)
- c1842 James works as a shop boy for James Purvis a chemist & druggist in Palace Street. Purvis suffers from consumption - attended by Dr Rigden, who meets Beaney 'I could not but remark on the attention, industry & care which the boy displayed'. Purvis moving to Hearne - asks Rigden to employ Beaney
- c1843 James works for Dr Rigden in Burgate Street (Canterbury Dispensary & private practice) first as an errand boy. He was 'very intelligent & very assiduous' so Rigden taught him to dispense medicines.
- 1843 Mary Ann Snoad married John Whale (cordwainer) 1 October at St Mary Bredin
- 1847 Rigden submits his report 'The Sanatory (sic) Condition of Canterbury' to city council in May.
- 1847 Indentured dated 15 June - James George Beaney 'Doth put himself apprentice to William James Cooper Surgeon & Apothecary to learn the art, mystery or profession of Surgeon & Apothecary...to serve from 1June 1847 until ...the end of five years... he will teach, instruct or cause to be taught... and allow the said Apprentice to attend such lectures & Hospital Practice which are generally recognised'.



- W J Cooper (brother of Sidney Cooper) lived & worked at 38 High Street 1828-47 when he moved to the adapted 'Lion Hotel' at 17 High Street (next to the Beaney) he named both places 'Medical Hall'
- 1849 Marriage by banns 28 March of James George Beaney (surgeon) + Susannah Mary Griffiths (spinster) at Llanvrechva (Monmouthshire) Parish Church. Mystery how they met and were residing there!
- 1851 Census 30 March (Mothering Sunday) has James G Beaney (23) married, chemist visiting his mother Sarah Beaney (55 b Bapchild) living in Bekesbourne with her son in law John Whale (35 b Fordwich) cordwainer, his wife Mary Ann (28 b Westbere) shoe binder, their 4 children aged 8-1 and niece Sarah Joiner (13 b Canterbury).
- 1851 Mrs Susannah Beaney (27 b Pennalh) with her parents George (56) & Sarah (62) Griffiths + others on 40 acre farm in Cwmcarvan. George Beaney (25) sawyer living in Union Street, St Gregory's.
- 1851 George Beaney married Sarah Ann Bartholomew 27 December at St Mary's Patrixbourne.
- 1852 Attended a private school of medicine (Edinburgh?) to prepare for his academic studies. 'Pursued his studies so assiduously that his health gave way' (probably tuberculosis). Widely held belief that a long sea voyage say to Australia (via Cape of Good Hope) was beneficial. Beaney sailed from Liverpool to Port Phillip on SS 'Birmingham'. With health much improved - he worked in a John Hood's chemist shop in Collins Street. (Hood (1819-77) - Member of Legislative Council- Government of Victoria).
 (Discovered James Hoey's Journal of this actual voyage 11/7 to 14/10. It details gold prospecting at 'Eureka' Ballarat – and I bought a copy).
- 1853 Returned to London 1 May, as surgeon on the splendid new poop ship 'Barrackpore'. Studied at Edinburgh (under Professors Syme & Goodsir + Simpson, Alison, Forbes, Hughes- Bennett & Miller)
- 1855 Beaney examined at Royal College of Surgeons (Edinburgh) in Anatomy, Surgery & Pharmacy – duly found qualified to practise and awarded licentiate diploma 11 June (LRCS – Edinburgh). Testimonial from Sir George Ballingall MD FRCS Prof Military Surgery University - Edinburgh for army medical service. Passed Army Medical Board exam in June – gazetted assistant surgeon to '3rd Royal Lancs. Regiment of Militia'. Reinforcements for the Crimea ordered 22 June and 3rd Royals (c800 men + 80 wives) stationed at Preston, embarked on the 'Lord Raglan' at Liverpool next day - to Gibraltar as garrison replacements (Picture of ship & details in London Illustrated News 14/7). Hospital duty to 3rd Lancs. + 2nd West Yorks. + 92nd Highlanders. Severe loss of life from cholera, 'likely remedies failed' so Beaney tried stimulants (brandy & champagne) + warmth – success 'scarcely lost a man'. Accepted offer to accompany sick & disabled back to Portsmouth on steamship 'Europa'. Became a mason in Portsmouth. Appointed 'Staff Surgeon in the Turkish Contingent' sailed to Crimea on transport ship 'Cape of Good Hope.' Early user of anesthetics (chloroform) awarded Turkish medal.
- 1856 End of Crimean War - Armistice 29 Feb, Treaty of Paris 30 March.
 Returned to England in troopship 'Great Britain'. Left army - served as surgeon on emigrant ships ('Webster, Henry Clay, City of New York') to



	America - studied venereal disease in Paris – opens ‘Apothecaries Hall’ in Canterbury. (Bottle label found for ‘Royal Garrison Bouquet perfume prepared by J G Beaney 77 Northgate Street). But ‘business not answering his expectations, he relinquished it’ and emigrated to Australia.
1857	Surgeon on clipper ‘Shooting Star’ 254 passengers - Liverpool (16/11/56) to Hobson’s Bay (26/2/57). Joined ‘Melbourne Medical Board’ did locum work including Dr John Maund physician & analytical chemist, co founder of ‘Women’s Lying-in Hospital’ with an ‘excellent practice’ at 53 La Trobe Street East (Maund emigrated from Bromsgrove Worcs in 1853)
1857	Mrs Beaney arrives in Melbourne aboard ‘King of Algeria’ in December.
1858	Maund died from acute enteritis 3 April. Beaney takes over the practice ‘said to earn £10,000 pa’ – Sale of La Trobe so relocates to 88 Russell St South. Joins ‘Philosophical Institute of Victoria’.
1859	Moves to 122 Collins Street East. Publishes ‘Original Contributions to the Practice of Conservative Surgery’ dedicated to his tutor Prof Syme, 1st medical textbook in Australia, 168 pages, 10 chapters .
1860	Proposed for Fellow by President (Dr Inglis) Royal College of Surgeons – Edinburgh (2nded Syme) & elected 11May. Elected honorary surgeon to ‘The Melbourne Hospital’ (1 of 8 including T Fitzgerald) Member ‘Royal Society of Victoria.’ Guest at Governor’s Party for Queen’s birthday.
1861	Gazetted surgeon to the Western Battery of Royal Victorian Artillery (Capt. of New Militia 1883)
1862	Press notice death of ‘Sarah Griffiths, beloved mother of Mrs J G Beaney of this city’ [Melbourne]
1863	Beaney slandered by Dr Fitzgerald – refused to consult with him – ‘he’s an advertising doctor...his diploma is no good, it’s from United States’ etc Action in Supreme Court 1/8, but no unanimous verdict from 12 man jury so case dismissed. Mr & Mrs Beaney attend Mayor’s Ball27/8 (fancy dress Beanseys = Duke of Rochester & lady) Return Ball 29/9 (Beanseys = Lord Abergavenny & lady)
1866	Much publicised case of Beaney’s trial for the murder of Mary Lewis (after alleged abortion). ‘Queen v Beaney’ jury failed to agree, but at 2nd trial Beaney acquitted 27 June. Books published that year by Reeves ‘In consequence of diseased womb’ and Beaney ‘Vindication with reflections on the inquest’. Lancet assessment 29 Sept. - ‘Conflicting medical evidence... careless post-mortem... medical animus against the accused... neglect of examining the ovaries... suffice to prevent case from coming to trial’
1866 to 1878	JGB had extensive & profitable private practice at 154 Collins St East/ honorary surgeon at ‘The Melbourne Hospital’/Lecturer in Clinical Surgery & Demonstrator of Operational Surgery at Uni. Author of various medical books (allegations of using ‘ghost writer’). Many friends & foes (jealousy) ‘Vehmgericht’. Motto ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you’. His activities attracted press coverage (e.g.1868 = subscriber to widows’ fund/Alfred Hospital cttee/ medical witness in assault case/advertises consulting hours/Queen v Beaney cited to support Government Pathologist/advertises for groom, coachman & houseboy/Testimonial for Kruse’s Fluid Magnesia)



- Civil Engineer friend S V Kemp returns to London (Beaney uses him as his contact/agent). Beaney feels 'years of unceasing application were telling upon him' considers retiring but decides on a study tour of GB & Europe. Obtains 10 month leave from Melbourne Hospital, transfers private patients to Dr Blair sells house contents etc (diamond collection realized c £10,000), Farewell Ball 30 May arranged by friends (Inc Mayor & J S Butters etc) Town Hall receives commemorative gold medal. Sails 12 June from Melbourne on P&O 'RMS Siam' arrives Southampton about 1 month later. Receives letter from Premier Berry 'to visit and report on the medical & sanatory arrangements practiced in the principal hospitals in U K & Europe to compared with similar institutions in Victoria'. Later Beaney's popular receptions infuriates the 'Medical Society of Melbourne', they deem his mission spurious and issue a circular disassociating their society.
- 1878 'One of his first acts was to visit his native city/revisits the scenes of his youth/donates £300 to his old master Ald Cooper to provide coals for the deserving poor'. Returns 22 October for a Banquet at the Fleur-de-Lis Hotel. Chairman Furley (in lieu of Cooper sick) gave résumé of Beaney's life/10 toasts including Beaney – responded 'delight...to be in dear old Canterbury... deep gratitude for kind reception' remarked on 'the many rebuffs encountered in the world'. Rigden & the Dispensary + Sidney Cooper who 'alluded to the similarity of his own early life with Dr B... architect of his own fortunes' + health of WJ Cooper (message via son) – 'satisfaction at success of former pupil...his perseverance, determination, & native talent... in his abundance he has remembered his suffering and poverty stricken fellows'. Visits K&C Hospital with J M Prendergast.
- 1878 Mrs Beaney + maid leave Melbourne in February sail to London on 'SS Kent'. Visits younger sister Harriett near Bristol (whilst Beaney was 'in pursuit of professional labours') dies of Meningitis 5/2/79. Headstone 'beloved wife' of JGB 'her life, the ocean to the river of his thoughts, death has terminated all'. OBIT 'spent life visiting the sick...comforting the poor...stirs to good... actuated by highest principles...Christian charity'. JGB - 2 visits to Bristol Royal Infirmary – I presume they met.
- 1878 Australian & N Z Gazette reported on 16 December Beaney has 'visited nearly all the London hospitals, Guys, St Thomas's, University College, & Bart's – has spoken to their surgeons (and those at St George's & Charing Cross). Visited main hospitals in Ireland, passed exams in Midwifery at King & Queens's College Dublin. Returns to 'Shelbourne Hotel' Dublin 28/12
- 1879 Attends banquets, meets General Grant gives dinner to Lord Mayor etc returns to London 14 January.
As Mrs Beaney's died 'suddenly' did JGB get to see her? After her funeral his itinerary included visits to Edinburgh, Glasgow & Aberdeen, study at St Andrew's for MD graduated 24 April/a visit to Paris to see new 'Hotel Dieu' hospital and obtain plans/Donated £1,000 to found scholarship at University of Edinburgh also St Andrew's £1,000 for the better endowment of a chair of Medicine & Anatomy on 24 June.

- Further visits to Ireland in March & July - more banquets, orders new surgical instruments from Mayer & Metzler – displayed in exhibition at London Cutler's Co in May. Many of Beaney's speeches ended with the Australian song 'Cheer, boys cheer/No more of idle sorrow/Cheer, boys cheer/United heart and hand/Cheer, boys cheer/There's work for honest labour/Cheer, boys cheer/For the new and happy land. Musical compliment The 'March Membron' by Mr Tench J White (of Canterbury) dedicated to Beaney. He gave banquet at 'Criterion' London on 23 August; guests included S V Kemp, J M Prendergast (Australian student at Guy's) & Dr Rigden. Friends from Dublin, Sir William Carroll MD & Prof Quinlan MD visit JGB at Jermyn St 15 Sept presented special 'Bog Oak Album' followed by dinner given by SV Kemp at 'Criterion' Farewells at Waterloo included a fellow officer from Crimean.
- 1879 Sailed P&O from Southampton 18 September on 'RMS Hindustan' (via Suez Canal) changing to 'RMS Assam' at Brindisi. Returned to Melbourne, accorded a reception by his friends...resumes practice at his former residence (115 Collins St East) from 10 November...previously brought him not less than £16,000 pa'. Elected honorary surgeon (+ others) to the Melbourne Hospital 20 August & MD (Ad Eundem) University of Melbourne December 1.
- 1880 Beaney sued by his publisher (10 books) F F Bailliere for £400 the cost of procuring 'commission' from Premier Berry – verdict for defendant. Beaney steward at 'Grand Masonic Ball' 20 October
- 1880 Death of William James Cooper on 29 April. Buried in Non-conformist Cemetery at Wincheap.
- 1881 Bailliere killed in railway disaster - accident on 30 August 1881 'oddly tragic dying man (Bailliere) expires under the hands of his old friend and subsequent opponent Dr Beaney).
- 1882 Damning report on the condition of Melbourne Hospital. 'Men of the Time in Australia' 1882 by Capt H Morin Humphreys has 500+ biographies including Beaney. Treasured by him and bequeathed 2 copies to Canterbury (now lost). Contents much as this timeline but has Beaney's birth year as 1831!
- 1883 Beaney requests Mayor of Canterbury (Alfred George Beer) to arrange a presentation to Dr Rigden at the 'Rose Hotel' with 'bumpers of champagne' (held on 11 May). He added 'I may also inform you that I have been sworn in as a member of Her Majesty's Legislative Council, which is the colonial House of Lords and bears the title 'honorable'. I hope I may soon be able to pay another visit to the dear old city'. Gold watch inscribed 'presented to George Rigden MRCS, surgeon to the Canterbury Dispensary by (JGB etc) in slight recognition of Mr Rigden's kind & valuable service to the sick poor of Dr Beaney's native city, for nearly half a century, Melbourne 27 January 1883'. Beaney gave address to 'Fitzroy School of Design' stressed that 'the 3R's are but the stepping stones to true culture... he must learn there is a beautiful and fruitful study called Art'. Beaney was president of 'Fitzroy Bowling Club' also 'Carlton Lacrosse Club' also vice-president of 'Victorian Rowing Association' and reputed to have a 'fine tenor voice'.



- 1884 Beaney was firm advocate in Legislative Council's debate on Public Health Reform' 30 September
- 1885 Beaney arrived back in Melbourne on 21 December 'his health greatly benefitted by his 9 month tour in Europe'. Back in May the Mayor of Canterbury (J Coppin) received a 'packet of magnificent jewels valued £1,300' from Beaney 'to be disposed of by means of an Art Union and the proceeds shared by K&C Hospital & Canterbury Dispensary'. Committee set up, found proposal not approved by Board of Trade. Dr Beaney advised - he deputes Mr Kemp to deliver two £250 cheques to mayor. Gratefully received and banquet offered. Beaney makes visits to Ireland & France & stays in Canterbury at 'Rose Hotel' for about a fortnight. Attends Banquet at 'Forester's Hall' 28 June, the mayor chaired/music (including 'March Membron') /11 toasts & speeches / Dean Payne Smith 'our distinguished guest is an instance of that energy which has made this small country of England so important... he does not come here empty handed...he comes to support our institutions...with marked munificence'
- Dr Beaney 'it gives me great pleasure... when I can contribute to... those whom sickness or misfortune has rendered incapable of helping themselves...having obtained my diploma as a surgeon... found that my early success... created a feeling of uneasiness among my professional confreres'/ Dr Rigden 'proud...that it was in his surgery that Dr Beaney acquired the rudiments of medical & surgical knowledge'/Henniker Heaton (MP for Canterbury) 'inspires confidence among his patients...by his talents which are as genuine and as brilliant as the sparkling gems which he loves so well...pleased to find that in the hour of his success he had not forgotten to benefit his first and early love, Canterbury'
- Sidney Cooper 'all rejoice...in a man who was the architect of his own fortunes...my late brother often say Dr Beaney would be a successful man...he has been able to throw a Rembrandt-ish gleam of light and hope...o'er the dark chamber of disease and death'.
- Gave 'Dinner to the Deserving Poor (total 2,400) at the Agricultural Hall on 30 & 31 July, to celebrate the marriage of the Princess Beatrice to Prince Henry Maurice of Battenberg (on 23 July). 'Regaled themselves... with meat, bread, tarts and pudding... washed down with draughts of that good, honest, strong ale for which East Kent is famous'.
- Gave dinner for the inmates of the Workhouse on 10 August, prior to another trip to Dublin. Then following a banquet in London, he sailed from its port on 5 November aboard P&O 'SS Massilia' and arrived back in Melbourne on 21 December when he resumed his practice at 115 Collins St East.
- 1886 Inquiry into the 'Melbourne Hospital' desirability of removing it to a new site. Beaney comments that 'it compares favourably with sanatory institutions in other parts of the world... public mind disturbed by deprecatory statements...need to allay fear'. Working party set up.
- 1887 Beaney buys site and holds a competition for his new mansion and surgery at 135 -139 Collins Street.
The result was a flamboyant 3 storey, 23 roomed structure, with corner turrets, designed by William Salway and called 'Cromwell House'. He



	employed a housekeeper and let out rooms to other doctors. Purchased in 1916 by the 'Alexandra Club', it added a further floor and it's still there today.
1889	Beaney heard that the 'Medical Hall' where he had served his apprenticeship (next to today's Beaney Institute) was up for sale. He believed it was the ideal location for an institute 'similar to those in the colonies'. In March he arranged for Mr S V Kemp & Dr Rigden to visit the mayor and many his offer 'a gift of £3,000 to convert the 'Medical Hall' into a homely place for the working classes'. The mayor chatted with a few cronies; they politely declined his offer and suggested they'd prefer a new town hall. They got neither. A frustrated group of workers wrote to Beaney and he replied 'I am deeply sensible of the disappointment that you feel...I regret deeply the action...I may reconsider the matter when next I visit Canterbury'.
1890	Samuel Valentine Kemp died of pneumonia 13 April/(Probate Register - Personal Estate £5358)
1891	Death of Hon J G Beaney on 30 June from cerebral condition, complicating hepatic disease & gout
Obit	The Argus (Melbourne) – (extracts) '12 months ago Dr Beaney had a serious attack of 'La grippe' [influenza] ... though suffering much from his illness he continued...his profession...symptoms of rheumatic gout appeared...then followed the long & painful illness...4 weeks since he was forced to keep to his bed...when serous apoplexy developed...he did not expect to recover...told his housekeeper...he would sink into a comatose state 24 hours before his death ... breathe his last at 4am. ...he gave the Legislative Council useful aid when dealing with matters affecting public health'.
Obit	The Australasian Medical Gazette – (extracts) 'one of the leading and most successful surgeons in Australia... a generous and good-hearted gentleman'. Gave details of his will.
Obit	Illustrated Australian News – (extracts) 'his professional status was very high...acknowledged by his brethren... to have attained an eminent degree of skill in the surgical art ...brief sketch of his career will prove interesting' [details utilised in this timeline].
Obit	Kentish Observer – (extracts) 'Dr Beaney died on Monday night... we received the announcement of the event by cable ...shortly after seven o'clock on Tuesday morning... [gives life-story utilised in this timeline] 'His wife died her ... on a visit with the doctor... [It repeats the refusal of Dr Beaney's offer for the 'Medical Hall' during the mayoralty of the late Mr Prentice. Kentish Gazette repeated same.]

Biography

The longest published details of Beaney's life story are the 3 pages in the 'Australian Dictionary of Biography. Summarised as a surgeon, politician and philanthropist/he's described (a) professionally as 'a bold surgeon, perhaps rash and rough at times' his appearance (b) appearance as a 'short, podgy man' with 'pale blue, rather shifty eyes', with his hair curiously upswept to either side of his head 'like a pair of horns'. His flamboyant dressing, embellished with diamond studs, diamond and ruby rings and a bejeweled gold watch with diamond



pendant, made him an admirable subject for caricature. It states incorrectly that Beaney was married in 1870 also ‘not known that she ever visited Victoria’ and it only surmises that Beaney ‘probably arose from’ the working classes!

Time line for executing James George Beaney’s will

Principally in Canterbury

- 1885 I the Honorable James George Beaney of 154 Collins Street. East ...declare that this to be my Last Will and Testament...signed 23 April 1885 (presumably just before his ‘tour of Europe’) It contained 21 separate items – those for Canterbury were:- To the Kent & Canterbury Hospital £200/To the Canterbury Dispensary £100/To the Dean & Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral £1,000 for repairs - conditional on allowing a suitable tablet in the aisle costing £1,200 in memory of the Testator with inscription to be agreed by Dr Rigden & Mayor (identical sum for a monument over Testator’s grave)/To Testator’s brother, interest on £400 for life, then his widow then paid to their son or daughter/Final residue of estate to be paid to Canterbury’s Mayor & Corporation to buy a piece of land and erect thereon a Free Library & Reading Room for the Working Classes.
- 1890 First Codicil made by the Honorable James George Beaney made on 23 December 1890 with new address of ‘Cromwell House’- the items altered for Canterbury were:- A Bequest in lieu of previous, to pay the Canterbury’s Mayor & Corporation £10,000 to buy a piece of land and erect thereon a Free Library & Reading Room for the Working Classes (the Building when erected to be called ‘The Beaney Institute for the Education of Working Men’)/To Canterbury’s Mayor & Corporation, the Testator’s Medical Diplomas & Military Commissions/As to the land situate in West Cliff Rd, Kent to permit Testator’s brother & wife to occupy it during their lives then sell it after their decease.
- 1891 Second Codicil made by the Honorable James George Beaney on 6 June 1891 (just 24 days before he died) - the items altered for Canterbury were:- Additional bequests to Canterbury’s Mayor and Corporation of Illuminated Addresses, Certificates, Licenses, Testimonials, Gold Medal, Crest, Scrap Book, 2 volumes of ‘Men of the Time’ and the Testator’s photos, portraits and other oil paintings.
(All to be selected by Testator’s solicitor (Mr T J Wyburn) and sent at the expense of the Estate).
- 1891 The Will was read on 6 July at the residence of the late Dr Beaney, ‘Cromwell House’, Collins Street.
The total value of all specified bequests was £20,580 of which £6,000 were medical benefactions with £3,300 in UK and £2,700 in Melbourne (the remainder was gifts for individuals or institutions). The residue of the estate amounted to about £60,000 was for distribution between the University of Melbourne and seven Melbourne hospitals and charities. Headlined ‘A Splendid Gift’ in the Kentish Gazette, ‘on account of the Beaney bequest of £10,000 to build a free library for the working man’.
- 1893 Dean Payne Smith & the Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral agreed that

- the £1,000 bequest be used for repair work in the crypt. The Dean, the Mayor (Councillor Mason) and Dr Rigden, conferred about the ‘tablet’. Designs were obtained and James Forsyth, sculptor of the recent memorial to Bishop Perry was appointed. The resultant monument was unveiled on 1 March by J Henniker Heaton (MP for Canterbury/formerly from Australia) Dr Rigden gave a brief narrative on Dr Beaney and Dean Payne Smith was pleased ‘to accept this beautiful memorial... if it can lead others to rise by their own efforts ... similar to Dr Beaney, then this monument will be of great use’. The inscription included the words ‘Sacred to the memory of the Hon James George Beaney MD... the munificent founder of the Beaney Institute’ but at that time the legality of Beaney’s £10,000 bequest was being challenged in Melbourne. It was found to be ineffectual by reason of the mortmain laws of England. But...
- 1894 ...on appeal to the Privy Council, a decision was made on 19 November in favour of the Mayor & Corporation of Canterbury. It set up a ‘Beaney Bequest Committee’ Councillor Mason as chairman (he much regretted the decision made in 1889 under the late mayor Mr Prentice re the ‘Medical Hall’)
- 1895 Adam Horsburgh Campbell AMICE appointed City Surveyor in March. His first task – to select site for institute. Four locations studied, that occupied by ‘George & Dragon and Greyhound’ in High Street selected and Campbell was appointed as architect for the project with £10,000 cost limit.
- 1897 Seven tender received on 1 March and that from Henry Bell Wilson (builder, joiner, steam saw-miller & timber merchant) of 22 St George’s Place in sum of £7,563 was selected. Stone laying ceremony held on 16 Sept. performed by Mayor Collard assisted by Ald Mason (H Heaton & Dr Rigden there)
- 1898 Contract completion date of September extended by 12 months due to extras etc (Final cost £13,439)
- 1899 Formal opening ceremony for the ‘Beaney Institute’ took place on 11 September. ‘a great crowd had assembled...Mr Wilson gave Mayor Collard an inscribed gold key as a memento of the great occasion ...hoped it would be of benefit to citizens, visitors and especially the working classes...Ald Mason invited the mayor to declare the building open...replied I feel sure we’ve all been waiting for this day...I’ll open the door with this beautiful key’. Mayor & guests enter the building, prayers were said and speeches were delivered including Henniker Heaton...’glad to see my venerable friend Dr Rigden present...hope he would write the story of Dr Beaney’. Sadly that did not happen.

Alan Barber has worked as a volunteer in Canterbury Library and has researched the life of Dr James George Beaney, discovering many hitherto overlooked facts in original documents held in Canterbury Museums and Galleries collections and Canterbury Cathedral/Kent County Council Archives.

We are very grateful to him for allowing us to reproduce his research here.





.....
THE BEANEY
HOUSE OF ART
& KNOWLEDGE

The Beaney
18 High Street
Canterbury
Kent CT1 2RA

General Enquiries: 01227 862 162
thebeaney.co.uk
facebook.com/thebeaney
Twitter: @the_baney



Canterbury City Council & Kent County Council's redevelopment of the Beaney is supported by:



Homes &
Communities
Agency

Supported by
The National Lottery
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



2 Mers Seas Zeeën
INTERREG IV A
FRANCE - ENGLAND - FLANDRE - HESSELS
"Investing in your future"
Crossborder cooperation programme
2007-2013 Part-financed by the European Union
(European Regional Development Fund)



THE STUDY
Dr James Beaney

