
Baldwin Hamey Junior – Ninth Registrar

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Since its incorporation in 1518, no one has given the College greater devotion or munificence than Baldwin Hamey. Although his tenure of the office of Registrar was short compared with some of his successors, his character, his life, his work and his ceaseless endeavours for the welfare of the College make him one of the most outstanding of the 40 Registrars who span the four centuries since the first was appointed.

Baldwin Hamey's father, Baldwin Hamey senior, was born at Bruges in 1568 and graduated in medicine from the University of Leyden. After serving for five years as Physician to the Muscovite Czar, Theodore Ivanovitz, he returned to The Netherlands, marrying Sarah Oeils at Amsterdam in 1598. As Huguenots, it was expedient for them to leave The Netherlands and in the same year they came to the City of London where Baldwin senior practised successfully and gained great respect despite refusal of a licence by the College until 1610. Indeed, on one occasion he was warned and on another heavily fined by the College.

Baldwin senior and Sarah were exemplary parents to their three children, Baldwin junior, Jeremy and Elizabeth. Baldwin junior, born in 1600, was sent to his father's old university at Leyden in 1617 and studied philosophy and letters there for four years. He lodged with Philip Cluverius, a geographer with an English wife, and they became close friends.

In 1621, Baldwin Hamey senior, concerned by the outbreak of the Thirty Years War, recalled his son to England and sent him to Oxford where he studied the humanities; but his facilities were limited to the Bodleian Library and both he and his parents were intensely disappointed by the educational opportunities offered. So, in 1622, he became apprenticed to his father for a period of three years during which he acquired most of his professional skills. In 1625 he returned to Leyden, graduating the following year as a Doctor of Medicine with a thesis 'De Angina'.

Returning to his apprenticeship with his father, Baldwin did not yet feel ready to pursue a career as a London physician and indeed he had no licence from the College to do so. He therefore set out on a tour of other continental centres of learning including the universities of Paris, Montpellier and Padua. The night before he was to sail from Hastings he dined with the Mayor. Whether

it was the dinner or the guidance of the Almighty is uncertain, but the Mayor had such terrifying nightmares regarding the perils awaiting Baldwin on his short voyage that he sent a guard to prevent him embarking. Although the weather was fair when the ship sailed, within an hour a storm arose and the ship and all its 60 passengers were lost.

In 1627, Baldwin had the great good fortune to marry, at the church of St George the Martyr at Southwark, Anna de Petin, the daughter of a wealthy Rotterdam merchant. Anna was of French extraction and had been educated at Rouen in Normandy. She was a most sensible, loyal and affectionate wife and it proved the happiest of marriages though to Anna's disappointment there were no children. They lived for all their married life in a large house in St Clement's Lane previously occupied by Sir Noel de Caron, the Belgian Ambassador.

In 1628, Baldwin applied to the College to be examined but was advised to defer his application. Two years later he obtained the Doctorate of Medicine of Oxford and reapplied. After protracted examination he was admitted a Candidate upon paying fees of £11 3s 4d. and given a licence to practice in the city. Simeon Fox, who was elected President in 1634, had already become a close friend and was one of his examiners. Shortly before his election as President, Fox secured Hamey's election as a Fellow, despite some opposition. Six years later he became a Censor, an office he held eight times.

Hamey's success as a physician was phenomenal, though he never sought practice. His mother died in 1638 and his father in 1640 and from them he inherited considerable wealth, and Anna, his wife, was not poor. They lived simply and Baldwin's interests centred on scholarship and the College, to which he developed an obsessional allegiance.

Sadly, when everything should have been for Hamey the quintessence of happiness and fulfilment, the Civil War erupted. Hamey was a Royalist through and through and his build, beard and general appearance were strikingly similar to those of King Charles I. He and Anna were discreet enough to remain overtly neutral and to pay the levies of the Roundheads who knocked on their door. However, during a supper party at St Clement's Lane one night, a Roundhead bullet narrowly missed Hamey's head and caused permanent deafness.

Unhappily, despite its royal charter, the College was biased towards the Parliamentarians and Dr John Clarke, elected President in 1645, was an avowed Roundhead and received much increase in his landed estates in consequence. The College was required to pay a levy of £5 a week to the Parliamentarians but Clarke's known sympathies enabled exemption to be obtained. Many, like Hamey, prudently did not declare their allegiance but William Harvey did not attend the College during Clarke's presidency. Hamey's friend and patient Dr Edward Layfield was deprived of the living of All Hallows and incarcerated and callously ill-treated on a ship in the Thames because of his Royalist sympathies.

On 30th January 1649, during a period of intense cold when the Thames was frozen over, the King himself was beheaded. His dignity and courage in his final hours will ever be one of the finest chapters in the history of the monarchy. Hamey in some way came into possession of the blood-spotted lace collar which the King had worn on the scaffold, as well as many other Stuart relics.

Isaac Dorislaus, a friend of Philip Cluverius, received much kindness and generosity from Hamey but he lacked judgement and discretion and fell into debt and other difficulties. These weaknesses and misfortunes were doubtless to some extent responsible for his becoming closely identified as a law officer with the Parliamentary forces. Despite this, and the fact that he owed Hamey £50, Hamey's strong sense of loyalty to his friends compelled his assiduous but unsuccessful attendance to Dorislaus, who was seriously disabled by gout. Dorislaus prepared the charge of high treason against the King but paid the penalty three months later at The Hague, where he had been sent by Cromwell, when Cavaliers murdered him while he was at supper at the Witte Zwaan Inn, an attempted assassination the previous evening having been unsuccessful.

In 1646, Hamey had pneumonia from which both he and Anna feared he would die. Anna sent for Sir Theodore de Mayerne, King Charles's physician, and happily, despite repeated bleeding, Hamey recovered. At the height of his illness the Roundheads knocked on his door in St Clement's Lane and demanded 36 pieces of gold. Anna gave them immediately, saying nothing of the incident to her perilously ill husband. On his recovery one of Hamey's first patients was a general in the Parliamentary army who had contracted a venereal infection. He offered Hamey a bag of gold as a fee but this Hamey refused, whereupon he emptied his pocket and gave Hamey the contents—36 pieces of gold, exactly the sum the Roundheads had extracted from Anna by fear.

In 1646, the College at Amen Corner was confiscated by the Government as church property. Hamey purchased the house from the Government for £267 10s 0d with legal expenses of £16 7s 8d and two years later he gave the property to the College.

Hamey was appointed Registrar of the College in 1646 but he held office for only one year, probably on account of his illness. He was reappointed Registrar in 1650, holding office until 1655, when he was succeeded by his friend Dr George Ent. On vacating the Registrarship he

became an Elect and Senior Censor and presented the Registrar's silver bell to the College, together with a gift of £66. In 1648, his Goulstonian Lectures were received with acclaim and in 1658 he was elected a Councillor and a marble tablet commemorating his benefactions to the College was placed in the Harveian Library.

In 1632, Hamey's sister, Elizabeth, had married Andrew Palmer of Roydon in Essex. They had 10 children but Elizabeth died young and in 1658 Andrew died too. Thereafter the surviving children made their home with Baldwin and Anna Hamey at St Clement's Lane. One of the girls, named Elizabeth after her mother, had married Dr Thomas Burwell who was President of the College in 1692 and 1693 but she died in childbirth a year before her father's death.

The year 1660 brought both sorrow and joy. Hamey's dear and devoted wife Anna, who had been failing for some time, died, and thereafter his life lost much of its happiness despite the company and interest of the Palmer children. On the other hand, there was the Restoration, but Charles II was a disappointment to Hamey. He had sent Charles much financial support while he was in exile at Breda and when he returned to the throne Hamey paid for a costly *elegantissimum unicornis cornu* to be made in gold by Edward Hansorrest for the College to give to the monarch. The presentation was made by the President, Dr Edward Alston, who was immediately knighted for the 'College's' generosity. Hamey himself, at a private audience, gave the King a magnificent diamond ring which had belonged to Charles I. It cost Hamey £500 to retrieve it from the rebels into whose hands it had fallen. On it were cut the arms of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, and when he received the gift the King offered Hamey a knighthood and the appointment of Physician-in-Ordinary but Hamey declined both. The new King, who had been an object of hero-worship to him, fell far short of his expectations, and his subsequent life proved the wisdom of Hamey's judgment. A year later Hamey gave the King a further financial gift, and the offer of a knighthood was renewed but again refused.

In 1664 Hamey was appointed Treasurer of the College and in the following year the King attended the Lumleian lectures, given by Hamey's successor as Registrar, Dr George Ent, whom he knighted at the end of the lectures.

The Great Plague came to London in 1665. Most of the physicians fled to the country for safety but Hamey remained in St Clement's Lane continuing his practice and his College work and, happily, was one of the few that was spared. The plague brought great difficulties regarding security and Hamey therefore arranged for the College plate and funds, amounting to about £1,000, to be placed in a chest in a strong room at the College. The chest was triple locked by Alston, the President, Hamey, as Treasurer, and Christopher Merrett, the Harveian Librarian and Resident Custodian. Merrett fled in terror to the country to escape the plague and the three locks on the chest were filed through and its contents stolen by a thief who was never apprehended. Among the items lost was the cup bought with the £20 which Hamey's father bequeathed to the College in his will in gratitude for the Fellowship ultimately conferred upon him.

After the Great Plague the city was so altered that Hamey decided to retire from practice, to relinquish the Office of Treasurer of the College and to live in Little Chelsea. He sold his house in St Clement's Lane and from then until his death nine years later, for health reasons rarely left his new home. The nature of his illness is uncertain. He became increasingly deaf but his intellect clearly remained unimpaired for he continued to manage his properties in London, Essex, Middlesex, Leicestershire and Surrey, and derived much happiness from his nephew Ralph Palmer and his family who lived near him in Chelsea. Ralph Palmer's fifth child, also named Ralph, wrote a manuscript biography of Hamey which is still in the possession of the College.

In 1666 the Fire of London destroyed the College at Amen Corner, Hamey's old house in St Clement's Lane and much of his property in the city. A new College was built in Warwick Lane on land bought from Mr Thomas Hollier, the St Thomas's Hospital surgeon, who removed Samuel Pepys' bladder stone in 1658. The price of the land was £1,200, of which Hamey paid £502, and in addition he gave £100 towards the cost of the building. A further benefaction, which happily in part still survives, was the Spanish oak panelling of the long room or caenaculum. Part of this was skilfully transferred to the Censor's room when the College moved to Pall Mall in 1824 and from thence to Regent's Park in 1964.

Hamey was a man of unbounded generosity. He supported a succession of indigent students, mostly from abroad, a few of whom, including John Sigismunde Cluverius and Robert Wright, justified his aid, but the majority did not. Philip Cluverius and his English wife gave Hamey great friendship and kindness when he lodged with them as a student at Leyden, but both died young and impoverished, Philip from tuberculosis. Hamey's munificence helped their son, John Sigismunde, to be educated at Charterhouse and Exeter College and Corpus Christi College at Oxford. Robert Wright and his wife both died in 1646 and Anna and Baldwin Hamey gave much to their orphan child, Anna being her god-mother.

In 1675, the centenary of the University of Leyden, Hamey sent 10,000 florins to purchase an organ for the university. He received a gracious letter of thanks but naturally all those he knew as a student had long since gone and no one there was personally acquainted with him.

Hamey was always a devoted and faithful member of the Church of England. He was greatly impressed by the Reverend John Pearson, later to become the Bishop of Chester, who preached at Hamey's church, St Clements, and they subsequently became life-long friends. The Reverend Edward Layfield, the vicar of All Hallows, Barking, where Hamey's father and mother were buried, was a valued friend whose sufferings at the hands of the Roundheads caused Hamey intense sorrow. When he moved to Little Chelsea the Reverend Dr Adam Littleton, Rector of All Saints, Chelsea, became a great admirer and friend. Littleton included a long Latin poem in praise of Hamey in his Latin dictionary and he also edited and published Hamey's essay on the Hip-

pocratic oath. Hamey's bounty to All Saints, Chelsea, was such that Littleton had its dedication changed from 'All Saints' to 'St Lukes'. He gave a new tenor bell (which later had to be recast), and large sums for the rebuilding of the western end of the church and its re-roofing. Lady Jane Cheyne also contributed to the cost of the roof. Hamey also paid for the roofing of his own church, St Clement's, Eastcheap, for the organ at All Hallows, Barking, and contributed generously to St Paul's Cathedral and many other churches.

In 1657 he bought Great Ashlyn's Farm at High Ongar in Essex and 14 years later the manor and adjacent Little's Farm. He conveyed the whole of this property to the College in trust. It was the greatest single benefaction the College has ever received and was retained until 1922. A manuscript map of the estate hangs in the President's room at the College.

Hamey was repeatedly pressed to accept the Presidency of the College but always refused. A factor affecting his decision was doubtless the Civil War, in which Royalist sympathies might have harmed the College, but he was essentially a modest man and neither sought nor expected recognition of his great services to the College, the City, the Church or the profession. The Earl of Northumberland invited him to be his physician but this he declined as he had a royal appointment and a knighthood. His reputation and status as a physician were rivalled by few of his contemporaries yet he was never associated with any of the London hospitals and his only publication was his MD thesis on quinsy. Littleton published his essay on the Hippocratic oath but despite his great scholarship and erudition his only other contributions are his Goulstonian Lectures, his *Notes on Aristophanes* and his *Universa Medicina*, the manuscripts of which are among the most treasured possessions of the College. Throughout his life, he wrote, always in Latin, biographies of members of his family and those with whom he had been closely associated. The first of the 'Brief Lives' is that of Theodore Goulston, whose lectures he gave, but the whole work *Bustorum Aliquot Reliquiae* contains biographies of 53 other physicians, many relations, friends including Isaac Dorislaus and Van Dyck, and other prominent contemporary figures. The original is in the possession of the College and a copy is in the British Museum.

On 14th May 1676 Hamey died and was buried wrapped in a linen sheet 10 feet below the chancel arch of his adopted church of St Lukes at Chelsea, now again All Saints, Chelsea, or Chelsea Old Church. A black marble slab was placed over his grave with the inscription from Psalm 146, verse 4 'When the Breath of a Man goeth forth, He returneth unto his Earth', and in 1717 a monument was erected. Both were destroyed by enemy action in 1941 but a small wooden figure of St Luke the Evangelist, given by his servant, Henry Fletcher, escaped unharmed.

His portrait, painted when he was 38 by Sir Anthony Van Dyck (Fig. 1), has disappeared but there is a copy in the Bodleian Library. The College has another portrait painted by an obscure artist named Snelling and presented to the College by Hamey's great-nephew,



Figure 1. Baldwin Hamey, Junior. From the Bodleian Library's copy of the lost portrait by Sir Anthony Van Dyck painted when Hamey was aged 38. (Courtesy Bodley's Librarian.)



Figure 2. Baldwin Hamey, aged 75, by Edward Pierce. (Courtesy the Treasurer of the Royal College of Physicians of London.)

Ralph Palmer, in 1700. It was painted when Hamey was 74 and includes busts of Hippocrates and Aristophanes, his favourite Greek authors. The following year the College commissioned Edward Pierce, the sculptor, to execute a bust of Hamey and paid him a fee of £50. Hamey never saw the finished bust (Fig. 2), which, to the College's shame, lay unclaimed in Pierce's studio for seven years and doubtless would have been lost forever had it not been for the interest and repeated demands of Hamey's great-nephew, Ralph Palmer. Even so, when the College moved to Pall Mall in 1824 its identity was lost and it became erroneously known as a bust of the Marquis of Dorchester.

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