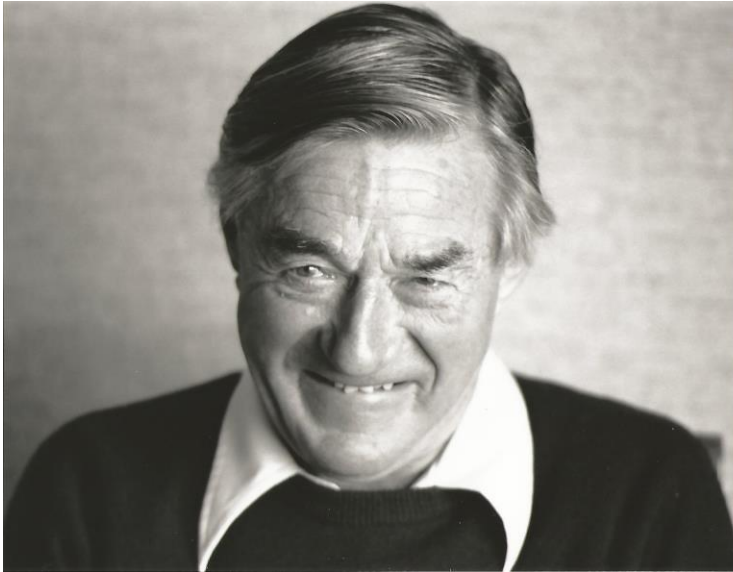


## DENNIS TUCKWELL



I saw Dennis on Friday 2nd November 1990 at Beckington Avenue in Bristol.

As ever, the first thing he wanted was to discuss his affairs which included his forthcoming trip to New Zealand in fourteen days' time. He will be away until the end of February and on his return will be placing his house on the market so as to emigrate to New Zealand in the summer of 1991. He has already put his Spanish property on the market and hopes to have sold that by next spring.

He has looked into the question of his Retirement Pension and finds that it will continue to be paid in New Zealand for the remainder of his lifetime but at the rate payable when he leaves the United Kingdom. This does not bother him because the pension he receives from Wills not only continues to be upgraded every year but more importantly continues for the benefit of his new wife from the date of their marriage. In fact they will pay her 60% of the pension payable to Dennis at his death plus subsequent increments.

He tells me that he left school at fourteen and managed to find an apprenticeship to a firm of electricians, much against his family's will since they wanted him to work in an office. His wages were seven shillings and six pence per week when he was sixteen he had the opportunity of a job in Wills as a labourer at twenty eight shillings per week. Given the other benefits of working for W D & H O Wills, he did not hesitate. This was in 1936 when Dennis was 16 years old. In 1938 in common with many other young people, Dennis realised that there was going to be a shooting war. He and a group of other young men from Wills enrolled in the Territorial Army.

They joined the RAMC and in 1939 Dennis was called up and went to France as a Medical orderly. He returned from France by way of Dunkirk. His only comment on this time was that he and many others were amazed to be greeted on railway stations as heroes when they all knew that the battle for France had been lost. His comment on Dunkirk was that it was something of a shambles.

He remained in UK until *D* day when he landed at Arromanches at 8am as part of a field surgery unit. He said that the reason he remained in UK for that length of time was that he was an all-round sportsman and was in great demand to play for the regiment. After *D* day he spent the remainder of the war in Europe.

I asked whether, in view of his medical experience, there was any question of him remaining in the Army or pursuing a career in medicine. He explained that the firm had made up his pay throughout the war to the figure he would have earned had he not been in the Army. In addition, they were willing to train him as an electrician which they did, so a career in medicine was a non-starter. Dennis was quite restless after the war so instead of returning to the RAMC, he decided to try the RNVR. He enlisted as an EM2 and in the fullness of time was rated Chief Electricians Mate. He was compulsorily retired in 1972 when he was 52. He then read the Regulations and applied to re-join as an EM2, was accepted and in three days was made up to PO. His Chiefs status was restored to him shortly thereafter.

Dennis was a confirmed bachelor but in his forties he married Sylvia Coleman a divorcee with one son Barry. They lived in his house in Beckington Road, Knowle and Sylvia became very well-known at the Flying Fox. Sylvia became ill with a kidney complaint and after a long battle with dialysis, she was offered a transplant. This was in the very early days of transplants and she did not recover from the operation and so Dennis was alone again.

He retired from Wills at 60 and at the same time had to leave the Flying Fox, although he was still a regular visitor to the Mess. After holidaying in Spain for a number of years Dennis resolved to spend his summers in England and his winters in Spain. To this end he bought an apartment in Spain which he enjoyed for a year or two so much so that he determined to sell the house in Beckington Road and purchased a flat in the Caxton House development at Templemeads. However before this plan came to fruition he met up with Mavis whom he had known after the war as a family friend. She had married and emigrated to New Zealand many years ago. Her husband had died some years ago and one of her two sons had been killed in an accident. They met up again on a visit she made to UK, and now so some two years later, Dennis at 70 is emigrating to New Zealand with a view to marrying in the spring of 1991.

I persuaded Dennis to be photographed in his Referee's strip. He said that he was proposing to referee his last match the following Sunday.

As to funny stories he related the tale of the day they were returning to Bristol on the Venturer. He had collected his dinner and sweet, the latter consisting of prunes and custard, which for some unknown reason he had placed on the bench beside him. Wally Hodge came down from the bridge in his number one suit and promptly sat on the bench without looking where he was parking himself. Dennis says that Wally told him that it was a very silly place to put his prunes and custard and Dennis says that he had to agree with him. I shall be fascinated to hear Wally's version of this incident.

**Bob Baxter**