



William James Haynes

Bob Baxter 16 November 1990

At the time of this meeting I had not seen Bill Haynes for some years. In fact the last time we met was at least three years ago. He was in his car parked at the bottom of Sion Road opposite the houses built by Joe Bees who I recall was a client of John Counsell. On that occasion we had chatted and Bill decided that he would like to talk to me professionally and as a result of that he appeared at the office and I made him a new Will.

On this occasion at his home, Bill greeted me with the offer of a drink which I refused on the grounds that I had to operate the camera. I explained to Bill the idea of my book and went on to say that although whatever was said would be for publication, I would not in fact publish anything which did not meet with his approval. In other words I would feel free to repeat anything he said in any other interview for the book but would not put it into print without his agreement. That was alright by him.

I am not going to attempt to record our meeting in chronological order as it came out but rather to put it in time sequence. Bill explained that he had always been something of a hard man in the sense of being unforgiving and not suffering those he considered to be fools gladly. This was certainly borne out later in the day when another member of the mess who shall be nameless joined us without invitation at the golf club. Bill simply froze him out.

His father joined the Army long before the First World War. He was then posted to North Wales where they were billeted under canvas. His father deserted and came back to Bristol. For some time thereafter he was harassed by the Redcaps. After several near misses he realized that the only way to lose the Redcaps was to join the Army. There was a local recruiting drive for the Scottish regiments and he found himself in the Royal Scots Greys. Whilst in this regiment (where the Army never found him) he served in South Africa where they put down riots using pick axe handles from the backs of horses.

Nothing changes in this world. He then saw service in India but when the Great War began his Regiment was very soon in the trenches in France where he served for the whole of the war. I got the impression that Bill attributes the hardness referred to before to this period.

Bill like Dennis Tuckwell joined the RNVR in 1938 and tried to join the Navy in 1939. He was turned down as being too young so he had to wait until 1940 before being called up into the Navy. He became a gunnery rating and in common with many others was drafted into the DEMS. in this capacity he spent a lot of time in convoys and early in the service was torpedoed, or "bumped" as he called it, in the Med during one of the convoys which suffered because of the German obsession with trying to sink the *Illustrious*. After this he went to another merchantman and spent some time between Calcutta and Bombay, to be followed in turn by trips through the Gulf, the Red Sea, the Suez Canal and up to Bari. This time they were loaded with ammunition and troops but the troops were not told about the ammunition.

They did not get into Bari due to intense enemy action so they ended up in Brindisi where they were very pleased to discharge the ammunition. From there they went back to the gulf area. On one occasion, they left port laden with ammunition just three hours before the ship alongside (also laden with ammunition) blew up devastating the port. At the end of the war their ship was one of the first into Singapore and Bill was in a party that began to

evacuate the British POWs who had been in Japanese hands for so long. This experience undoubtedly had a profound effect on Bill, as he acknowledges.

After demob, Bill came back to the Flying Fox in the days of Colin Wren, Jim Glover, Reg Sell and Frank Thompson. Bill reminded me that he had steadfastly refused to be promoted beyond Leading Seaman and indeed he never was. I can remember going to Victoria Barracks on a course with Bill many years ago. His recollection is that it was the Leading Hands' course but I think it was the Petty Officers' qualifying course. However whilst he remained a Leading Hand, Bill was probably one of the most experienced seamen of his rate at the Fox.

He suggested that I should look into the possibility of including Colin Wren in the book. He believed that he could lay his hands on a photograph of Colin and he could also fill me in with a fair amount of detail since he and Colin had known each other very well and he had been quite friendly with Colin's parents. He was able to recall various tales of Colin and I think on reflection that I will write these up separately under the heading of Colin since it now occurs to me that many of the interviewees will have a tale to tell of Colin Wren and his capers to add to those of Bill Haynes and myself.

As to Reg Sell, Bill said that he was one of the pre-war ratings who returned after the war and became a stalwart at the Fox and in the mess. They all drank quite a lot and Reg, also known as Plumby, was no exception. He was different from most of the others at that time since their method of transport was on bicycles or the bus. Reg who ran a small plumbing business had a small van. He and Frank Thompson left the Fox one drill night after a session and drove off in the van which at the first roundabout was struck from the side so hard that it turned over several times. The police appeared and since this was before the day of the breathalyser, they relied on the old methods of walking a straight line etc. Reg with his years of experience had no difficulty with these tests but unfortunately he was always a stutterer and as the night wore on, he stuttered more and more so the Police must have decided that the stuttering was a sufficient sign of intoxication locked him up for the night and in due course they charged him with drunken driving.

Reg was quite a popular character and must have been in high regard of the powers that were or at least the members of the ships fund committee who decided to underwrite his defence. A solicitor and in due course a member of the Bar were engaged for this task. They managed to persuade the bench that Reg was a natural stutterer and the case against him was dismissed. Reg was much more careful after that. For many years I had been hearing from assorted members at the Fox including in particular the late Arthur Hull of the story of the trip to Vigo when someone had bought a bullock and had shipped it aboard the old Mickey Mouse. Bill however knew the version that was full and unabridged since he had been there and his pal Jim (otherwise James John Herbert Seymour Sebastian Glover) who was the perpetrator.

Glover was the Cox'n and the ship was tied up alongside in Porto. On the first night alongside Jim comes off quite late having had rather more than his usual quota. Being the Cox'n there was no sign of this in his demeanour as he greeted the young Officer of the Day. "Did you have a good run then Cox'n". "Yes thank you Sir, but I'm afraid that I got into a spot of bother". "Surely not Cox'n, no-one in their right mind would take on a chap of your size". "Nothing like that Sir. I got involved in an arm wrestling match and I won". "Well then how can that be trouble?"

"Well Sir, this was a series of matches and the winner took the prize". "What's wrong with that, surely it's a matter for a celebration not a spot of bother". "I agree Sir, but the prize consists of one very large bullock and one very smelly goat". "What's wrong with that, surely you can sell them and have a celebration with the proceeds". "I wish it were that simple sir but you see these people are farmers and they will lose face if the winner who is an outsider anyway does not take the prize away. They know that I am from this ship and they are delivering the animals just before we sail so I have got to arrange for the animals to be housed onboard or there will be an international incident. I shall need your help to work out a way to deal with this."

"Yes Glover I'll see what I can do in the morning you had better get turned in now." "Thank you sir goodnight." Jim went off to his rest and the OOD thought that he had heard the last of the bullock and the goat. He was sadly mistaken. Next morning Jim put his head round the wardroom door whilst the young man was having his breakfast. "Good morning Sir. Have you thought of a way of housing these animals?"

And so it went on. The next demand was for some money to buy fodder for the passengers to be and the Wardroom had a whip round and gave Jim the money. He of course had to have extra time ashore to see to the animals since they had to be fed and mucked out. Jim was also endeavoring to unload his obligation to take the animals without giving offence to the organizers of the competition that he had won. On the last morning just before they were due to sail Jim came off mopping his brow with relief and was able to report that by a judicious mixture of bribery and wine suitably applied he had managed to dispose of the animals so they would not be delivered to the ship and they could sail without leaving any trouble behind them. Everyone down aft was greatly relieved.

Bill was unable to say how long it was if ever before they discovered that Jim had brought off a gigantic spoof and that all the people for'd had known about it.