

## **Dr. R. L. Hayman's Visit to Buckingham Palace**

### **On the occasion of his Investiture as a Member (Of The Order) of the British Empire**

We got Scruffy into her basket and took taxi to the central station. My sister was there as we arrived and was getting the tickets. We were rather taken aback to find that we had to pay £ 9-0-0 second class return for the three of us for the 108 mile journey. It included reserving seats, as is compulsory on the Pullman train. We were in one of the last coaches and there was room on the seat for Scruffy's basket between Mrs. Hayman and myself. We kept Mrs. Hayman's raincoat over the basket because it was a cold day, but as it turned out the train was quite warm.

At Waterloo we got a taxi to the Atlantic Hotel and were soon in our rooms. Dr. Vally Reich telephoned to us and promised to come over to see us, so we decided to go down to dinner. Dr. Reich joined us before we had decided to go down to coffee with us (she had already dined) and then chatted in our room and made friends with Scruffy.

We turned in early and had a good night's sleep, though Scruffy did not settle down too easily and preferred Mrs. Hayman's bed to her basket. We had breakfast and for once did not have to queue for places. Afterwards we changed and Mrs. Hayman had her light blue suit and brown coat and turban hat, and my sister had a green hat and coat. I wore my black lounge suit and resisted all pressure to buy an overcoat, hat and gloves, and wore my raincoat instead. We left the hotel a minute or two before ten and enjoyed directing the taxi driver to Buckingham Palace. When we got there we did not have to show my letter or the visitors' tickets, but drove straight in and passed through the left arch and on to the courtyard behind. On the far side of it we were waved up to the steps ahead of several cars which had entered ahead of us. Mrs. Hayman and my sister went in by the main entrance and I had to go to a door further to the right, and was shown to the cloak room. This was staffed by members of the Palace guard. Having left my raincoat in their charge I was directed up the stair case and through a series of halls to the enormous green room. At intervals officials checked up who we were and separated the holders of the different awards, sending some into one room, some to another. In the green room there were seats along the full length on either side, whilst the center was roped off. At the far end an official fixed a hook on the lapels of our coats. We were then invited to sit down to await events.

The gallery was hung with oil paintings and those near me were all by the Dutch school – Rembrandt and Rubens. The Rembrandt opposite me was the well known one of the shipbuilder and his wife.

In the mean time the visitors were taken to the hall or Throne room and seated in raised tiers of seats on either side. At one end were the two Thrones with their red back cloths, and at the other a gallery where the guards band was playing. The awards were to be made from the dais in front of the Thrones; and after receiving their awards the recipients were to be seated in rows of chairs in the middle of the hall facing the Thrones.

Back in the Green Room recipients continued to arrive until ten-thirty, and soon after that an official in military uniform came in and explained how we should be lined up in order, and then led through various rooms to the Throne Room, which we would cross at the band end to an ante room on the far side. All we had to do was to follow the recipient in front of us, and when he went for his investiture, enter the hall and walk a few paces facing across it,

stopping, next and official. We would find ourselves with the dais on our left, and the Duke standing at the middle of it. When our names were called we were to walk across in front of the dais till opposite the Duke; stop, turn left and bow to him (ladies to curtsy) and then walk right up till our toes touched the dais. The Duke would hang the Medal on the hook in our coats, and might or might not speak to us. He would shake hands with everyone, after which we would walk backwards to the point where we turned, bow again, and then turn right and cross to the ante room on the other side of the hall. Here we would have the hook removed from our coats, and our Medal handed to us in its case. He repeated this demonstration at both ends of the Green Room, and soon after started lining up the recipients in batches. The ropes were removed, so that we could take our places in line easily.

The recipients were of all ages, many in uniform, many in tail coats and many like myself in lounge suits. Some of them were far from smart.

One civil servant next to me was feeling very self-conscious because he was wearing brown shoes while all the rest of us wore black. He had flown over from Brussels, coming a day early because he feared the fog might hold him up. His wife followed him only that morning, being fortunate that the fog had lifted and her flight got through on time. A Queen Alexandra Nursing Sister in her green uniform was very nervous too. Her award had been made at the previous

Birthday Honours, but she had been unable to receive it then because she fell victim to an car infection which prevented her from balancing properly. She was recovering and was able to carry on normally provided she took three pills a day. We none of us liked to ask the others the reason for the awards, but we did find out where the others had worked. One businessman in tails was from Darlington, and was the only recipient from that city. He had a daughter in the audience and she was thrilled by the occasion. So was the daughter of a nice old lady in a green coat. She had run London House, a center for overseas students, and had now retired. She also felt very shy of the occasion, but had steeled herself to come for the sake of her daughter.

There were not many Navy officers, but plenty from the Air Force and Army. The Q.A. Nurse left our group to consult two naval sisters. She herself had been told that women in uniform never curtsy, but bow. She had not practiced a curtsy and indeed was a little nervous about it because of her balance trouble. She came back reassured – they felt that despite the master of ceremonies announcement, she would be free to bow or curtsy as she felt bet.

In the mean time batch after batch were lined up and led away, and it was soon clear that I should be in the last batch, which when the time came included the Naval sisters and a Yeoman of the Guard in his red livery. He was the only recipient who disobeyed the ruling that Medals would not be worn and his chest was covered with Medals. He looked a nice benign sort of Colonel Blimp ! But the recipients were indeed a varied lot, some typical successful businessmen, some smart members of the services, some comparatively young and some quite old. One old gentleman was bald headed and had a bushy heard and looked like some of the Belgian Statesmen of the period of the first world war, but turned out to have a very English name.

At length I took my place in alphabetical order in the line and we were led through various chambers, passing portraits of former princes, princesses, kings and queens, and at length came to the Throne room and crossed the back of it. I tried to spot Mrs. Hayman and my

sister but failed to do so in the short moment before I came to the far anteroom. From then on everything happened exactly as we had been told. Soon I found myself besides the official and a moment later the Lord Chancellor called my name and I took up my place in front of the Duke. He hung on the Medal and then asked me if I had retired, who was my successor, how the school was getting on, and how it was affected by the present situation in Ceylon. I answered to the best of my ability, and he showed every sign of interest in my answers, before shaking hands as a dismissal. In the far anteroom the medal was removed and the hook taken. The medal was handed to me in a case and I was shown my seat in the middle of the hall. I soon spotted Ms. Hayman and my sister on my left. They looked just rightly dressed, and fitted into the picture very well. There were a few ladies who were overdressed and overmade up and they were very conspicuous. There were quite a lot of boys and girls and small children, all intensely interested. Only one man forgot his part and did not bow after the Duke had finished with him. The Duke laughed good naturedly when he turned again to remedy his omission.

When all was over the Duke walked out and it was almost exactly noon. The two Gurka guards who had stood rigidly at attention throughout must have been glad to be able to move. The Yeoman of the Guard had not been so still, and did not look too tired though they were at attention, and a St. Peter's boy came to congratulate me. He was there because his father had received an Air Force award. Mrs. Hayman and my sister joined me and I collected my raincoat from the cloakroom and we walked out of the Palace. It was raining a little when we got out of the Palace gate but the Press photographers were in search of their prey, nevertheless. One of them picked on us and took two photographs. We then got a taxi back to the hotel, and celebrated the occasion with lunch at a neighbouring restaurant, before caging Scruffy in her basket and taking taxi to Waterloo. We had a good journey home and had supper at my sister's home to the delight of everyone there. So ended a happy day and one we will never forget.

Perhaps more than all we shall remember the Duke's astounding memory. He spoke to a majority of 150 recipients, and as far as I know he made no mistakes even though our names were read out. Indeed he recalled to one officer a conversation they had had once on the only occasion they had met some years before quite by chance.

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