

The tragic death of Frank Haywood and a link with the *'Titanic'* disaster

During a season of guided walks around the Lye & Wollescote cemetery, led by Jean Weston and Marlene Price, attention was drawn by several people to the striking double headstone on the grave of the Haywood family, especially the intriguing inscription to 17-year old Frank Haywood who *'died at sea on the 22nd April 1904'*. Though this particular grave was not actually included in the tour Jean and Marlene are always keen to learn more about the cemetery and the people buried in its grounds. Subsequent research brought to light the tragic circumstances relating to the death of Frank Haywood, and has revealed a surprising and unexpected link with the doomed liner *'Titanic'*. It is through that link that the truth about Frank's death can now be told.

On Tuesday the 10th of May 1904 Susannah Haywood of High Street, Lye received a letter from Messrs. Thomas & Co shipping merchants of Liverpool bearing the sad news that her youngest son Frank, aged 17, had been washed overboard in a gale at sea and lost.

Susannah Haywood had been a widow since 1887 when her husband, Thomas, a grocer and provision merchant, died at the age of thirty-nine. At the time of his death, Thomas and Susannah had three children with a fourth expected. Frank was born at around the time that Thomas died so would never have known his father. Susannah's older sister, Hannah, was also a widow with two children, her husband having died in 1895. At the turn of the 19th century these two widowed sisters were living in High Street, Lye where they were running a Stationer's and Newsagent's business. When Susannah received the news of the loss of her youngest son, Frank, she would still have been mourning the sudden death, just over a year earlier, of her only daughter Frances Mary, known as *'Cissie'*, at the age of twenty-one.

It is impossible to know what prompted young Frank Haywood to go to sea, but he left home on the 1st of March 1904 and signed on as an apprentice on the merchant sailing vessel *'Boadicea'* for his first voyage. The three-masted 1,824 ton iron and

steel vessel, sailing from Dunkerque, was bound on a two year trip via New York, Sydney, China and Chile.

Frank was one of six apprentices on board the ship one of whom, James Moody, was the same age as Frank but with more sailing experience having already spent two years on board a merchant service training ship. It is through the letters and postcards which James Moody sent to his family back home in Scarborough that the events of that terrifying voyage across the Atlantic and the tragic death of Frank Haywood are told.

When the *'Boadicea'* left Dunkerque the weather was excellent though three of the apprentices were seasick, the worst affected being Frank Haywood who didn't have a single day without being seasick and homesick for his family back in Lye. Although thinking him a 'poor ninny' James Moody does seem to have had some sympathy with Frank and certainly bore him no malice. Frank's plight was not helped by the fact that one of the mates on board the ship had taken a dislike to him and Frank found himself the unfortunate target of the man's persistent bullying.

The fair weather with which they began the voyage was not to last and on March the 25th, as the rain and wind picked up, James Moody, with one of the other apprentices, was sent aloft where they spent an hour making fast the ropes. The others, including Frank Haywood, were not yet allowed to leave the decks. In spite of the threatening weather the wind was still favourable and they hoped to be in New York in less than 16 days, but this was a vain hope. For the next five weeks they did not have a single day's fair wind and, as the storm increased, the ship made little or no headway, going north and south instead of heading west towards America. The rain beat down relentlessly and the crew, including the apprentices, had only about three days and nights without having to wear oilskins.

James Moody's own description, in a letter to his family, cannot be bettered:

'In the first three days of the storm the 'Boadicea' lost three sails. It was an awful sight to see the great masses of canvas and rope rip up like silk with a noise like a train rushing through a tunnel. Captain Jones would not allow his new apprentices to leave the poop deck so they stood and watched the men climb slowly aloft trying to

save as much canvas as possible. On deck was no better as the vessel shipped heavy seas and then rolled, with the water rushing across like an avalanche sweeping everything away'. Ropes were stretched across the deck to provide handholds but sometimes they found themselves swept off their feet to, 'crash like a ton of bricks right into the scuppers with a white wave and perhaps five or six men on top of you'. The apprentices, lacking experience in how to manage their wet weather gear, were drenched day in and day out until they learned how to fasten their oilskins properly. The ships bulkheads and hull ran with water which burst through their cabin door and for five days a foot of water flooded their sea chests and the bottom bunks. Many of the apprentices' meals were swept away as they carried them from the galley. One miserable night their lamp went out and in desperation the boys slept in the poop for three nights with their oilskins on.

The worst event occurred on the night of April 10th. James Moody was shouting above the wind to a crewman two feet away when they heard a dull thud on the deck. Groping forward, barely able to see in the dark, they found one of the crew, Able Seaman Victor Benninghaus, had fallen from the foreyard smashing his skull on the deck's timbers. He died the next night and was buried at sea *'with a huge chunk of iron tied to his feet'*.

As horrific as the voyage was for James Moody and the other apprentices, it was even more miserable for Frank Haywood who must have wished that he had never left the comfort and safety of his home in Lye. Throughout the storm, when often it was feared that the ship would keel over, there was no let-up from Frank's tormenter and his despair was such that one night James Moody returned to their cabin just in time to stop Frank from cutting his wrists with a sharp knife. Although his fellow apprentice had prevented his suicide attempt on this occasion, Frank's obvious cry for help went unheeded. His other colleagues had their own anxieties and fears to contend with and appear to have been unsympathetic towards him. No one seems to have intervened when the mate who had targeted Frank so frequently told the homesick boy that he should *'drown himself'*. Frightened, helpless and at the mercy of a ruthless bully it was little wonder that the lad had reached breaking point.

On the morning of April the 22nd, as the apprentices were getting up at 4.00 a.m. for their morning watch, Frank Haywood suddenly ran from the cabin onto the deck with hardly any clothes on. Thinking that he was going to relieve himself, his colleagues took no notice of his absence until fifteen minutes later when he was nowhere to be found. It seems that Frank had taken the bully's words literally and thrown himself overboard. His body was never recovered.

On the 28th of April, the ship finally anchored off New Jersey and moved up river later that same day, coming alongside Brooklyn late that evening. The next day Captain Jones accompanied by James Moody visited the British Consulate to report the two deaths on board the '*Boadicea*'. Vice-Consul Joseph Smithers was given the official log and the version that the captain chose to tell, namely, that Frank Haywood's death was an accident as was that of Able Seaman Benninghaus. The New York Times reported the story of the horrific journey and the two deaths, speculating that a sudden lurch of the ship had caused Haywood to fall overboard. James Moody sent home a clipping from the newspaper across which he had written '*the skipper dare not say suicide*'.

It is interesting to note that on arrival in New York twelve out of a crew of twenty-two from the '*Boadicea*' deserted, with another three more following in later days. In June the ship resumed her voyage to Sydney, but Frank Haywood's former colleagues found that his death had not altered the behaviour of the bullying mate. To protect themselves they banded together and threatened the mate with violence and later that year the man left the ship. This action was all too late to save Frank Haywood whose mother back home in Lye would never have known what really happened to her son that April in 1904.

On another April night eight years later 25-year old James Moody, was now Sixth Officer aboard the liner '*Titanic*', on her maiden voyage across the Atlantic. He was manning the bridge with First Officer William Murdoch when just before 11.40 p.m. the lookout bell rang three times and a second or two later the telephone on the bridge began to ring. James Moody instinctively recognised danger and when he picked up the telephone and asked '*What do you see?*' Frederick Fleet the lookout replied '*Iceberg right ahead!*'

What followed was possibly one of the most dramatic events of the 20th century, the story now well known through numerous films, documentaries and TV series. James Moody along with other officers aboard the doomed liner helped with the evacuation of the passengers and saved many lives that night. As a junior officer, by rights he should have gone in one of the lifeboats but gave up his place to Fifth Officer Lowe saying he would find one later. James Moody was last seen by Second Officer Charles Lightoller trying to launch the collapsible boats. He was not seen again and his body was never recovered.

James Moody's name can be found on a memorial plaque in the Church of St. Martin's on the Hill, Scarborough and on an additional monument in Woodland Cemetery which tells of his role in the '*Titanic*' disaster. Frank Haywood's name was added to the family headstone in Lye Cemetery below the words, '*Peace, Perfect Peace*'.





Haywood family grave