

### Day 6 (the Dog Blog) – of the CV crisis

The Government tells us that people should only go out for, amongst a very few other things, essential shopping. The Guvnor, on the back of delivering a birthday card late-ish in the evening to someone who lives in Warminster but who is precious to many who live in Codford, drove past Morrisons on his way home. The car park was almost empty and, on looking through the windows of the supermarket and finding it almost deserted, he went in for some shopping. He returned home at 9 pm, having shared the shop with just one other person, to proudly show off his choices of 'essential items' – a lettuce and some spinach for his wife, four lamb chops to share and two bottles of gin for himself. His wife said cryptically: "Welcome home, Hilary."

This was an oblique reference to Hilary Hook. Hook was born on 26 September 1917 and was educated at Canford School in Dorset, and the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, after which he was commissioned into the Indian Army in 1938. During the Second World War Hook served in New Guinea and Burma.

Postings included Aden, Germany, Hong Kong, and the Sudan. He was promoted major on 27 January 1951 and finally retired from the Service as an honorary lieutenant-colonel on 13 October 1964.

Hook became famous with the British public in the 1980s as the result of a BBC documentary entitled *Home from the Hill* directed by Molly Dineen. This portrayed him as having led a full life of adventure in the British Empire, before coming home to an England which had changed out of all recognition to the one he remembered. Memorable scenes

included Hook relaxing on the veranda of the game lodge he ran in Kenya while an African servant mowed the lawn, and back in England attempting to operate a kitchen appliance and voicing his displeasure at a pop music act on television.

The documentary was based on Hook's autobiographical book *Home from the Hill*, in which he describes participation in activities such as pig-sticking, elephant hunting and polo. It deals with the themes of colonialism, international development, and the end of the British Empire – in particular, through his alienation from the modern world having lived all his life in a vastly different culture. The phrase 'home from the hill' is from a line of Robert Louis Stevenson's poem "Requiem": *Home is the sailor, home from sea, And the hunter home from the hill.*

On his return to England, Hook settled in Westbury in Wiltshire. One of the scenes in the television programme has him coming out of Safeways (now Morrisons) after a 'successful' weekly shop. His trolley contained 6 bottles of whisky and 400 cigarettes. He died in September 1990.

Hilary didn't seem to have had the help afforded to 'elderly' people today. There were no Emmas or Rosies or Katherines or Davys or the many other kind young people who have knocked on doors or left notes or sent emails offering to shop, fetch, carry or just be there in case; and in Safeways there were no Brendans or Johns or Rachels or Karens or Caroles and the rest of their wonderful staff who are seriously putting themselves out to look out for us and after us.

The Guvnor keeps saying how lucky we are to live here; I agree with him, as long as there is dog food in the cupboard under where the gin is kept – and that Boris still categorizes James Wellbeloved's Lamb and Rice kibble as 'essential shopping'.