

# **The Brian Hunt Story**

## **by interview**



*Brian what can me tell me about your early life?* I was born Brian Anthony Hunt on the 28<sup>th</sup> July 1934 in Brixton, South London and moved to Gidea Park, Romford in 1939. Schooling was at St Edwards, Romford and Gidea Park College. I was evacuated for 2 years, with my brother David two years my junior, to Criccieth in North Wales, after our home was damaged by a land mine during the blitz. After returning home and before completing school I fell in love with horses and ran away from home to be an apprentice jockey. As this romance waned when promoted to steeple racing I felt the call to the sea and the exciting ports to explore (a girl in every port they say?).

*After Vindicatrix sea training tell me about your time at sea.* After leaving the Vindi in June 1951 my first ship was the “S S Beaconsfield” as a cabin boy going to West Africa, bunkering at Dakar on the way and back (anybody remember Onion beer there?) Lagos was quite a large port and busy in 1951 and we swung at anchor for six weeks, even aged seamen prayed for the pilot to come to us. We loaded timber, anybody remember tying up to the jungle at Sapelle, we were soon to learn what the metal discs were for on the mooring ropes.

Graduating from tramp steamers after a few years I ended up on passenger boats, which I thoroughly enjoyed, the actor came out in me and found out that I could earn good tips with a bit of bull. For some now obscure reason, even though I had just recently become engaged to Eileen (an excuse for a party). I jumped ship in NZ from the “Corinthic” with a mate after about nine months my collar was felt by the local Police on the direction of Dicky Bird who never gave up looking for ship jumpers. After the normal punishment, which in my case was doubled I was on remand for 6 weeks, while my fate was being decided the local Mayor and Council fought for me to stay in NZ. I was eventually returned home to a very frosty reception from Eileen in the UK. I then did a couple of seasons on the “Royal Sovereign” up and down the River Thames daily, after that I did my last deep sea trip to South America as it was the only country I hadn't been to.

### ***On what ships have you served?***

1951 “SS Beaconsfield”  
1952 “MV Windsor”  
1953 “Largs Bay”  
1954 “Rhodesia Castle”  
1955 “Rangitiki”  
1956 “Corinthic”  
1957 “Carnatic”  
1957 “Royal Sovereign”  
1958 “Paraguay Star”  
1958 “Royal Sovereign”

*After leaving the sea I hear that you received some MN decorations can you tell me what they were?* Well I had applied with copies of my Discharge Book to the UK Merchant Navy

Association for a UK Merchant Seafarers Veteran's badge and on reply received the HM Armed Forces Veterans lapel badge and advised that I was also entitled to medals being: The Merchant Navy Medal, Malaya Conflict Medal, United Nations Korea Medal and the Volunteer Service Medal, which came as quite a surprise and most proud to wear.

***Where did your career take you after leaving the sea?*** On marrying Eileen I settled down to what I thought was mediocrity, truck driving, engine assembly at Fords, labouring on building sites. However following in both our parents' profession decided to become Licensed Victuallers (Publicans). After initially training for nine months at The White Hart at Bromley in Kent we were recommended for our first managed Pub by Harry Bygraves (brother of Max), this was the Crooked Billet at Berkhamsted, Herts. One bar only, dunny out the back and a bath once a week at the Royal Hotel at Tring twenty minutes away by car. We were then promoted to the Red Lion at Potters Bar, two bars and a bathroom.

After a couple of terrific years and two sons we decided to purchase our own tenancy in our own turf of the East End of London, this was the City Arms on the Isle of Dogs at Millwall. We took over from a retired sea captain all the upstairs rooms overlooked either the Thames or West India Dock I was back home! So great was the success of this venture starting off with just Eileen and myself, that we ended up with a staff of twelve in the bar, two pot men, two cleaners, one nanny and a band of three plus guest artists every night and Sunday morning. Because our main guest artists were Woolly Woofers as Drag Queens our motto on our business cards was "If you want to see the Best End come to the East End". We eventually featured in many articles and on TV, the stars soon followed both of films and TV, this resulted in us becoming the third busiest Pub by sales in London. Of course the bubble had to burst in the form of the Krays, despite going to the police, who we then found out were on their payroll and having our payments doubled I moved Eileen and the two boys to a secret location in Stratford and employed another gangster to run the pub.

We eventually sold up and moved in anonymity to a small Post Office and shop at Upper Halling in Kent, a much quieter life that also produced our third child, a girl. Unfortunately the business books had been cooked and a supermarket opened in Snodland six miles away, once again back to seven days a week and five of those driving a truck to make ends meet, it took three years to sell out. During that time my eldest, who was doing a geography project at school, asked me to help him with his home-work on Australia, "Australia" I said "they're testing the bomb in the right place." Memories came flooding back of the treatment of Poms by the Aussies. Quite by coincidence the next day I was delivering paint to "Australia House" in my truck and came home with all the glossy advertising for prospective migrants for my sons project this started the ball moving and eventually selling up and moving back to the East End in Bow, driving a truck once again. On a spur of the moment decision we took a cancellation booking to Australia and 24hrs later arrived in Brisbane on the 26th November 1970.

***How did you manage the move to Australia?*** After a few weeks trying to find work and being told by the Commonwealth Employment Service that my qualifications being managerial I should be in either Sydney or Melbourne!!! Eileen got a job in the swankiest pub in town the Inala Hotel, every night they had to hose the public bar out, I followed the same day painting a house at Rochedale on Christmas Eve 1970. Hence was born "Hunt's Painting and Decorating Service". Now in the ranks of the employed we cashed in a life insurance policy and put a deposit down on a house in Bellbird Park, we lived, laughed and loved that house for twenty-four years. There were a few dramatic times as in January 1980 I had a quadruple heart by-pass at the Prince Charles Hospital at Chermshire, this eventually made me give up painting and take up Real Estate selling, I loved the work even the hours. In 1990 I had an opportunity to purchase the franchise

for the Post Office at Redbank Plains, so I grabbed it and once again it was head down bottom up to build a successful business, made even more difficult as I decided to run for the local council. After being elected unopposed the public found a very accessible councillor to air their views to and made for some very interesting conversations at the PO counter.

At the second election in 1994 I topped the poll out of ten contestants; obviously this councillor had done something right, unfortunately my ticker decided that I was doing too much and had to spend a few days in intensive care. About this time we decided to sell the Post Office as they were fetching ridiculously high prices and not to contest the upcoming election for the merger of Ipswich and Moreton Shire and so retired in 1995. With the monies from the sale of the Post Office I started to build a house at Tumbulgum NSW on the Tweed River as an owner builder, which was completed in 1996. The house at Bellbird Park was then sold and I then really started to enjoy retirement. I have now since moved to a unit in Tweed Heads as a downsizing exercise.

***What are some of your achievements since coming to Australia?*** I have had a full and interesting life and list some of my highlights:

1974 Inaugural member of the Redbank Plains - Goodna Pony Club.

1975 President Redbank Plains - Goodna Pony Club.

1976 Treasurer Redbank Plains - Goodna Pony Club.

1976 Honorary Stock Inspector - Moreton Shire.

1976 President - Zone 3 Moreton Shire Pony Clubs.

1976 Member of the Queensland Council of Pony Clubs.

1978 Queensland Pony Club Judge and Interstate Selector.

1979 Appointed Justice of the Peace.

1980 Joined the Rotary Club at Goodna.

1981 Founded the Redbank Plains Tavern, Welfare Club.

1984 Bestowed life member, Redbank Plains Goodna Pony Club.

1985 Founded the Redbank Plains, Bushman's Carnival Committee.

1985 Founded the Redbank Plains, Recreation Reserve Committee.

1985 Elected to Queensland Recreation Council for Ipswich & District.

1985 Awarded the Telecom Advance Australia Award of Merit.

1988 Awarded the British Empire Medal by the Queen for "Service to the local community".

1991 Elected unopposed to the Moreton Shire Council serving on Health & Finance Committees.

1994 Re-elected to the Moreton Shire Council.

1995 Inaugural member of Vindicatrix Association Queensland.

2006 Treasurer Social Bowls Club, Condong Bowls.

2011 Vice President Qld Vindicatrix Assoc Qld

2013 Inaugural Member SE Qld Vindicatrix & MN Association

2013 President S E Qld Vindicatrix & MN Association Inc.

***Have you any other interests Brian?***

Stamp collecting (British & Australian), travel, golf, bowls in fact all sports, boating & fishing, horses, computers, home brewing and of course the tasting of the proceeds and reading just to mention a few. Though my wife Eileen and family come first in all things, we have now been married 55 years.

***Who are you favorite authors Brian?*** I have many favourites but off the top of my head the following would come first:

Wilbur Smith

Nicholas Monsarrat

Dick Francis

Jack Higgins  
C S Forester

*Lastly what is your favorite book?* “The Master Mariner” a book I have read many times.