

John Haime of Shaftesbury, 1709-1784

*By Mark Wareham (John Haime's seventh generation great grandson)
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JOHN HAIME

John was the son of a John Haime (or Haymes) 'junior', and his wife Elizabeth. John's father was a gardener, a poorly paid occupation, and he was grandson of John Haime who was a miller of Mill Lane in Shaftesbury. Mill Lane is now known as Haimes Lane because of the old Haimes family mill that used to be there. John was one of five surviving children of John and Elizabeth Haime, two others having died in infancy including his sister Frances in 1698. John was the youngest child and probably had a barren and unhappy childhood. In later life he admitted that he was very 'undutiful' to his parents and engaged in much 'cursing, swearing, lying and sabbath-breaking'.

Southey makes these remarks of John's appearance and life –

"Small inexpressive eyes, scanty eyebrows, and a short, broad, vulgar nose, in the face of ordinary proportions, seem to mark out a subject who would have been content to travel a jog-trot along the high-road of mortality, and have looked for no greater delight than that of smoking and boozing in the chimney corner ... and yet [he] passed his whole life in a continual spiritual ague."



Picture of the south entrance of Haimes Lane in Shaftesbury where John's father had his mill. I understand that the mill was down the lane on the left where there is still a building called 'Mill Place'.

John initially became a gardener but disliked working under his father. He then tried button making with his uncle but soon tired of it and quit when his uncle moved to Blandford. He then had a number of other temporary jobs but "longed for some business that would allow me more liberty". He had a severe depressive episode and later said "I was often on the point of destroying myself and was stopped, I know not ho. Then I did weep

bitterly: I moaned like a dove; I chattered like a swallow.” For two years he faced these trials and it sapped his physical strength and this was noticed by his family including his mother. John had married in about 1729 and had his first child John in 1730. John enlisted in The Queen's Own Regiment of Dragoons, apparently after reading John Bunyan's autobiography and he left with his regiment from Shaftesbury for Gloucester on Christmas morning in 1739. This was just seven months after my ancestor, his daughter, Ann was baptized at the Holy Trinity church although I think she was born two years previously. John had a second daughter Jane Haime baptized in 1744 whilst he was abroad. She must have been conceived before he went abroad in 1742 and baptised later, similar to Ann. John wrote later of leaving his family that “... the thoughts of parting with all my friends, my wife and children were ready to break my heart... nevertheless when I came acquainted with my comrades I soon returned as a dog to the vomit”. John W. Haime in his 1970 book speculates that John's behaviour shows the “signs of escapism or defence against the phobias and the horrors which were to obsess him for varying periods during 20 years of his life. One can only imagine what his wife would have thought with her new family and not having her husband by her side. But if John was in so much angst and if him joining the army meant a regular family income, then it may not have been so bad for her.

John marched northwards to winter quarters in Berkshire and Wiltshire. In Banbury he bought a religious book and did much serious reading, attended church regular and prayed. In London, after a traumatic sea voyage, he had a 'spiritual awakening'. But after a bad experience with a Calvinist preacher who told him that 'the work of the Devil is upon you' he fell into suicidal despair “yet” he said “I thought if I must be damned myself I will do what I can that others may be saved”. He then heard Charles Wesley preach near Colchester and got personal encouragement from him.

In June 1742 John's regiment embarked for Flanders to play its part in King George's War (otherwise known as the War of Austrian Succession) from 1742 to 1749 and during this time he continued correspondence with Wesley who said he should follow his calling. Whilst in Flanders John formed a Methodist society with fellow soldiers and he was one of six preachers in a group of about three hundred men. On one occasion he is alleged to have reported on a fellow soldier for 'blaspheming' in his presence. The sort of action that Oliver Cromwell, a man of similar religious zeal after a conversion, would have admired in his New Model Army! When John was quartered in Bruges he was allowed by General Ponsonby to use the English Church there.

In February 1743 the regiment moved from Ghent into Germany, from where he continued to correspond with John Wesley who gave him advice. On 27th June John fought at the Battle of Dettingen and in John W. Haime's book he gives John's account of his involvement –

“... [he] was ordered out on an advance guard and saw the French moving up towards a bridge. Soon afterwards, hearing the sound of cannon, he said “we shall have a battle today”, but his comrades did not believe him... Then he heard another discharge and a third, from which the ball fell near them. Many of the French had now crossed the river and many more were advancing rapidly towards it. The cannon fire became more intense and the battle was soon joined with small arms as well as cannon, with very heavy casualties on both sides. Haime's party had now fallen back on the regiment which was moving forward in line. When his lefthand man was shot dead at his side, the effect on him was instant and electric.... “I cried to God,” he said “in thee I have trusted! Let me never be confounded!... I stood the fire of the enemy for seven hours.”

His brush with death had apparently jolted him out of his nightmares.

“When [it] was over he was sent out with a party to retrieve the lost baggage wagons but returned unsuccessful, to find that the army had moved he knew not where.... He made his way back to the battlefield and then, as heavy rain was falling, set out at random



A private of the 7th Royal Dragoons showing the type of uniform which would have been worn by John Haime 1739-49.

until the beat of a drum led him towards his goal. He could not find his own tent or secure shelter in any other "so... being wet and much fatigued, I wrapt me up in my cloak and lay down and fell asleep. And though it rained upon me and water ran under me, I had as sweet a night's rest as ever in my life."

The Battle of Dettingen was an Allied / English victory. It has a special place in the annals of British military history as it is the only time in modern history that a British force had been led on the field by a reigning monarch; King George II. This is a description of the activity of the regiment at the battle from Wikipedia –



The charge of the charge Dragoons at the French horse at the Battle of Dettingen.

"... they were formed up in a disadvantageous position near the village of Dettingen near the valley of Maine. They spent the morning of the 27th June, standing next to the 3rd Hussars exposed to the devastating fire from the French guns, but in the afternoon, stationed with the 4th and 3rd Hussars they charged, pushing the French Cavalry back and eventually with the support of the foot, broke the enemy's ranks."

One can see how this account mirrors John's memoirs and recollections of the early part of the battle. John later went on to tell of the French corpses floating in the river or washed up on its banks where they had drowned attempting to cross after the English had cut down the bridge.

The Regimental 'Guidon' (of the modern Queen's Royal Hussars) lists 'Dettingen' as the first of its battle honours. But this was to be the only victory of the 1742-49 wars that would gain this merit for the regiment, despite its constant efforts, sacrifices and bravery.

In May 1744 the regiment moved to camp near Brussels and John held open air services on a hill side where he usually had a thousand hearers: officers, men and civilians, often preaching four or five times a day. His regular preaching was

helping him expand his knowledge of the Bible and developed him as a person. Gone was the depressions and it was replaced with a religious fervour for conversion of 'fellow sinners'. He said "I preach against swearing, whoring and drunkenness, and exhort men to repent of all their sins, that they may not perish."

John next fought at the Battle of Fontenoy on 11th May 1745 which was a devastating French victory. He had his horse killed in the battle and it fell on top of him. He tried to extract himself from under the horse and was addressing an officer near to him, who is alleged to have said something like "where is your God now Mr. Haime", when a cannon ball took off the officer's head. The Queen's Own Dragoons achieved their task at this battle by charging again and again. But despite these efforts the battle was lost with the allies losing 10-12,000 men. The British dead numbered 1,237 and the wounded numbered 2,425. The result of this battle was a rapid French advance and the capture of Tournai.

After Fontenoy Haime noticed that the religious sacrament had not been delivered to his fellow troops for some time and he complained openly of this neglect. This displeased the regimental chaplains but the Duke of Cumberland (King George's 2nd son) hearing of it commended that it should be administered every Lord's Day to one regiment or the other. This made John rather unpopular with some and complaints were made against him that the Duke looked into. But on interview John said that the Duke "... seemed so well satisfied with my answers that he bade me go, and gave out a general order that I might preach anywhere, and no man should molest me." The Duke later went to hear one of John's sermons and in it, despite apparently not being aware of the Duke's presence, he made sure to tell his congregation that they "... fight a good cause, and for a good King and in defence of your country. And this is in no ways contrary to the tenderest of conscience, as many of you found at the battle of Fontenoy: when both you and I did our duty and yet were all the time filled with love, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

The Methodist theologian Adam Clarke wrote about John Haime in his works –

"It is worthy of remark how seldom God employs a soldier in any spiritual work, just for the same reason as that given to David; and yet there have been several eminently pious men in the army, who have laboured for the conversion of sinners. I knew a remarkable instance of this; I was acquainted with Mr. John Haime, a well known preacher among the people called Methodists. He was a soldier in the queen's eighth regiment of dragoons, in Flanders, in the years 1739-46. He had his horse shot under him at the battle of Fontenoy, May 11, 1745; and was in the hottest fire of the enemy for above seven hours; he preached among his fellow soldiers frequently, and under the immediate patronage of his royal highness the Duke of Cumberland, commander-in-chief; and was the means of reforming and converting many hundreds of the soldiers. He was a man of amazing courage and resolution, and of inflexible loyalty. One having expressed a wonder "how he could reconcile killing men with preaching the Gospel of the grace and peace of Christ," he answered, "I never killed a man." "How can you tell that? were you not in several battles?" "Yes, but I am confident I never killed nor wounded a man." "How was this, did you not do your duty?" "Yes, with all my might; but when in battle either my horse jumped aside or was wounded, or was killed, or my carbine missed fire, and I could never draw the blood of the enemy." "And would you have done it if you could?" "Yes, I would have slain the whole French army, had it been in my power; I fought in a good cause, for a good king, and for my country; and though I struck in order to cut, and hack, and hew, on every side, I could kill no man." This is the substance of his answers to the above questions, and we see from it a remarkable interfering Providence; God had appointed this man to build a spiritual house in the British army, in Flanders, and would not permit him to shed the blood of his fellow creatures."



The Queen's Own Dragoons c 1750

Most British regiments withdrew from the continent later in 1745 to suppress the Jacobite uprising at home but John's regiment remained and was involved in the Battle of Roucoux on 11th October 1746 at which the French were again victorious and as a result they broke Austrian control over the Netherlands. In 1747 the regiment saw it's last action at the Battle of Lauffelt, another French victory but one at which the British cavalry saved the allies from a major defeat. In 1748 the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle ended the war and in the regiment landed back in England in 1749.

On return to England John was discharged from the army. He fell into a miserable state of mind for seven years after the European wars but continued his religious preaching. He was admitted by Wesley as a traveling preacher but he remained ill at ease and was unable to become settled. Wesley once took him on one of his preaching rounds knowing his state of mind. It is unclear when exactly John was reunited with his family but he was in Shaftesbury in 1766 when Wesley persuaded John to go and dwell with the Hoskins family in St Ives in Cornwall who wanted a live-in preacher. That same year his wife Susannah passed and was buried in the graveyard at Holy Trinity. John continued to be mentally distressed for some time, in fact worse than before, but one day it is reported that he 'instantaneously recovered' after about twenty years of illness and appeared to find inner peace. He was living with another family as a preacher in Whitchurch in 1778 and from where he continued to correspond with the Wesleys. He died of a fever and was buried at Whitchurch.

The information above comes from –

'The Life of John Wesley by Robert Southey'

'The Haimes - a Dorset Family by John W Haime 1970'.

The family line from my grandmother to John Haime see page 5

