

Boyce Hayes - Chauffeur to the Duke of Sutherland



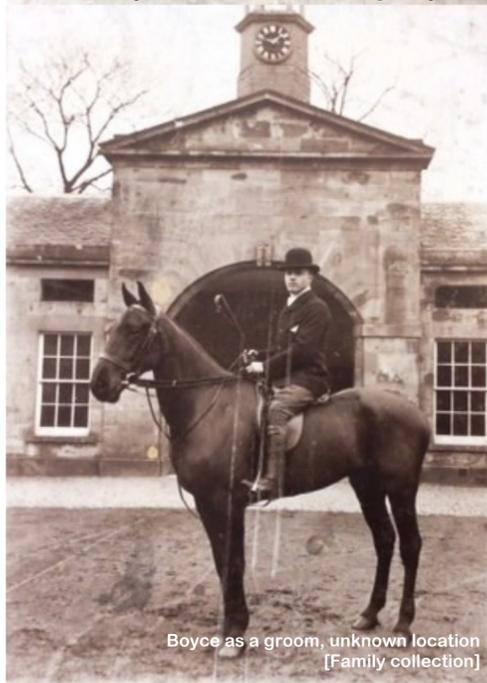
Boyce dressed as a coachman [Family collection]

Boyce Hayes was born in Tunstall in 1881 and his father died when he was five. He came to the notice of the 4th Duke of Sutherland as a choirboy at St Peter's Church in Stoke. The Duke promised him a job as groomsman if he would transfer to Trentham Church and sing in their choir. Boyce took the job when he was around the age of 12. At some point he became a chauffeur to the Duke, eventually being sent to Rolls Royce for his driver training. In 1899 the Duke was invited by Kaiser Wilhelm II to visit Germany and Boyce accompanied him. Boyce was given a letter from the British Consulate in Berlin, signed by the British Ambassador, ensuring safe passage during the visit. This letter is still in the possession of the family.

One of his jobs was to drive the Duke's regular visitor, Grand Duke Michael Mikhailovich of Russia, between Trentham Hall and Keele Hall, which was the Grand Duke's residence for a decade from 1901, following his banishment from Russia. In 1911 Boyce was working as a coachman at Shavington Hall, near Market Drayton.

In 1913 he went to Saskatchewan, in Canada, and staked a land claim near Winnipeg, but returned in January 1915. When he joined the Army Service Corps [Mechanical Transport] as a driver in October 1915, he was living in Hanley with his sister Fanny, whom he named as his next of kin. As well as buses for transporting troops, he drove ambulance number 13, which had the good fortune not to be hit. He was discharged from service in 1919.

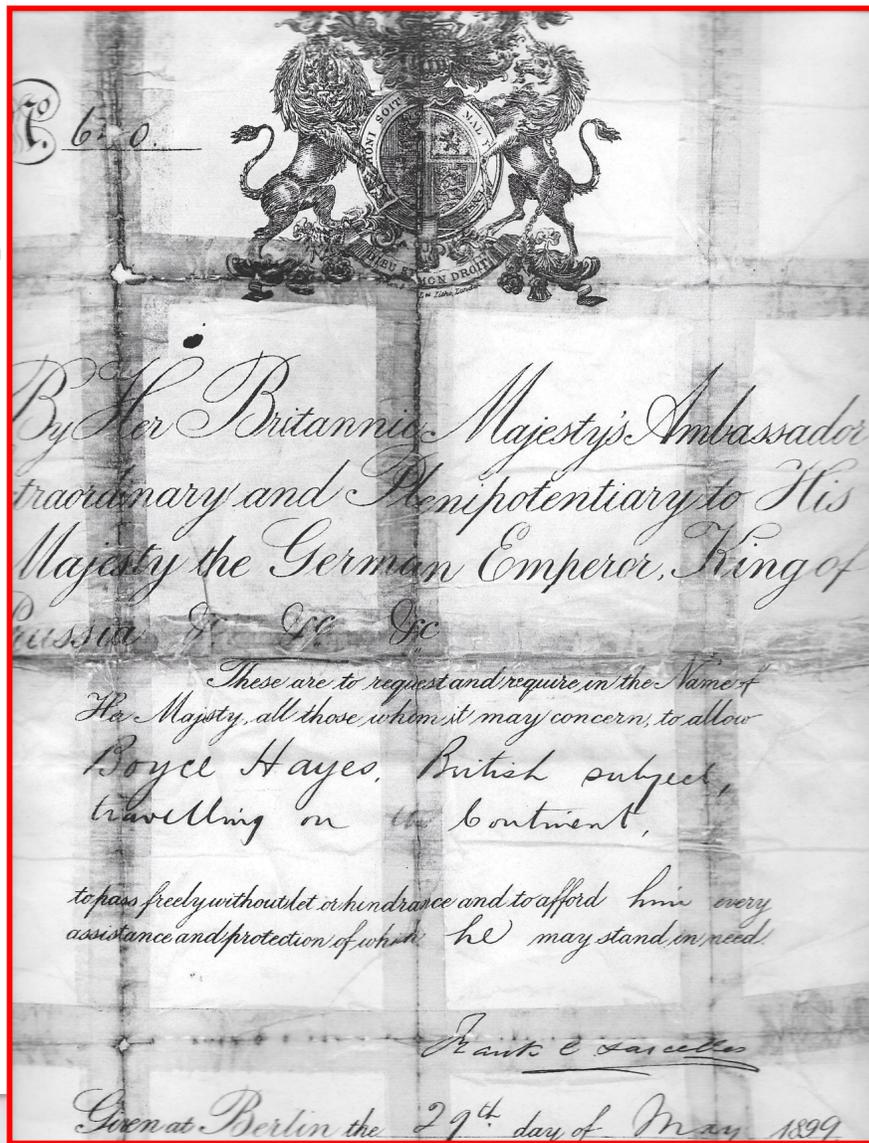
In 1930 he married Elizabeth Keeling. He started his own business, first in transport haulage, then in building. His company built much of the area round Riverside Drive in Trent Vale. He built a family residence in Queens Road, Penkull. The building trade was halted by the advent of the Second World War. Boyce died in 1963.



Boyce as a groom, unknown location [Family collection]



Studio portrait of men from the hunt stables [Family collection]



Private Boyce Hayes M2/130790 in front of an Army bus in 1917 [Family collection]