

## GREAT WAR STAINED GLASS WINDOW MEMORIALS IN KENT

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**No. 7: St Mary's Leigh**

***Lt Godfrey Valentine Brooke Hine***

**2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Irish Guards**

**KIA 6 October 1915**

**Window: St Mary's, Leigh**

**Kent links: Family home of Grandparents**

**Medals: 1914-1915 Star**

**War Grave: Vermelles British Cemetery, Pas de Calais**



**Source:** [http://www.ancestry.co.uk/genealogy/records/valentine-hine\\_56561380](http://www.ancestry.co.uk/genealogy/records/valentine-hine_56561380)

Godfrey Valentine Brooke Hine was born in 1890 in Reigate, Surrey and was baptised in the parish church of St Mary's on 6 July. He was the third son of William Egerton and Edith Louise Minnie Hine. Hine came into a family with a close connection to the Arts. His paternal grandfather was a landscape painter and illustrator for the comic magazine *Punch*. His father was art master at Harrow, the prominent public school, while his mother was a painter and sculptress.<sup>1</sup> He attended Harrow between 1904 and 1908 and was to be the only son who followed in the family's footsteps. Hine's eldest brother went to Australia and eventually became a farmer in Kenya. His other brother joined the Royal Navy, served in submarines and was awarded the DSO in 1919.

On leaving school Hine began studying the art of stained glass painting under the tutelage of Archibald Keightley Nicholson, who was making a name for himself as a maker of

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<sup>1</sup> For the mother, see 1891 Census, Ancestry.Co. For the father, see *Harrow Memorials of the Great War*, Vol. 3.

ecclesiastical stained glass. Nicholson (1871-1937) had only recently opened his own stained glass studio in Gower St, London, where he worked within the Arts and Craft tradition, which used handicraft methods of production rather than the division of labour methods employed by the more commercial firms supplying stained glass.<sup>2</sup> Hine was thus on a training programme that would ensure he became knowledgeable in all areas of stained glass window production, from the properties of different sorts of glass, through designing to the erection of the final product.

At the same time Hine, like his brother Gordon, displayed an interest in military affairs. It is not known if he belonged to the OTC while he was at Harrow (membership was not compulsory at the school until 1921).<sup>3</sup> But in 1908 he joined the Inns of Court OTC as a Private, No. 322.<sup>4</sup> As this early number suggests, he was one of the first to enlist in this new Territorial unit, which had been established following the reforms of the home defence system instituted by the Liberal Secretary of State for War, Richard Haldane, in 1908. It became part of the 4<sup>th</sup> London Infantry Brigade. It is possible that Hine was in fact re-enlisting, for the regiment had previously been the 14<sup>th</sup> Middlesex (Inns of Court) Rifle Volunteer Corps and had sent a contingent to South Africa during the Boer War. Hine was to remain in the unit's ranks until he resigned in July 1912.

At the outbreak of war Hine was keen to become involved in the fighting as soon as possible. With his public school and Territorial background he was suitable for a commission, which he received on 3 October 1914, being posted to the Territorial 1/9<sup>th</sup> Middlesex Regiment.<sup>5</sup> Within days, however, news arrived that the battalion was to be sent to India, to act as a garrison force replacing regular regiments being transferred to the BEF.<sup>6</sup> Before the battalion left on 30 October, Hine asked for his commission to be cancelled.<sup>7</sup> He had no desire to be stuck in a backwater while the war was being determined in France.<sup>8</sup>

Like many other young men anxious to participate in the war before it ended Hine, having second thoughts, became convinced that the route to France would be quicker if he enlisted in the ranks.<sup>9</sup> On 26 October 1914, therefore, he joined the 25<sup>th</sup> London Regiment, a battalion of Cyclists.<sup>10</sup> His hopes, however, were dashed and he languished in London until finally, on 28 May 1915, he was gazetted as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the Irish Guards.<sup>11</sup> As he had been given seniority from 26 September 1914, he was swiftly promoted to Lieutenant, on 6 June, the same day as his new colleague, John Kipling, son of the famous writer.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 'A. K. Nicholson (1871-1937)', The Victorian Web, <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/stainedglass/misc/nicholson.html>; Peter Cormack, *Arts & Crafts Stained Glass* (New Haven 2015), p.3.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Tyerman, *A History of Harrow School* (Oxford 2000), p.402.

<sup>4</sup> F.H.L. Errington (ed), *The Inns of Court Officers Training Corps during the Great War* (London 1922), p.201.

<sup>5</sup> *London Gazette*, 2 October 1914, p.7825.

<sup>6</sup> The Long, Long Trail, <http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/regiments-and-corps/the-british-infantry-regiments-of-1914-1918/the-duke-of-cambridges-own-middlesex-regiment/>

<sup>7</sup> *London Gazette*, 28 October 1914, p.8743.

<sup>8</sup> Another who cancelled his commission in the 1/9<sup>th</sup> Middlesex Regiment at the same time was Richard Markham Coote, a barrister. He was subsequently to be killed only a week after Hine at Loos while serving with 8<sup>th</sup> Royal Berkshire Regiment.

<sup>9</sup> The number of young men formerly in school OTCs who enlisted in the ranks within six weeks of the outbreak of war was so large that in mid-September 1914 the War Office issued a directive forbidding the practice. Adela Marion Adam, *Arthur Innes Adam 1894-1916* (Cambridge 1920), p. 129.

<sup>10</sup> Errington, *Inns of Court*, p.201.

<sup>11</sup> *London Gazette*, 25 May 1915, p.5094.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 November 1915, p.11161.

The Regiment of Irish Guards had been formed in April 1900 and at the outbreak of war in 1914 comprised a 1<sup>st</sup> and a Reserve battalion. Hine was initially attached to the Reserve Battalion. In July 1915, however, at the instigation of Lord Kitchener, it was decided to form a Guards Division.<sup>13</sup> With two new battalions required to make up the three brigades, the King approved the establishment of a second battalion of Irish Guards.<sup>14</sup> It began life on 17 July and became part of 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Brigade. Hine was one of the original officers when the battalion left Southampton for Havre on 8 August.<sup>15</sup> At the end of the month they met up with their sister battalion at St-Pierre, about 10 kilometres west of St-Omer. A day later they joined their brigade and began training with the Division in the Lumbres area.<sup>16</sup>

Preparations were being made for a major battle around the mines and slagheaps of Loos. Attacking in conjunction with French offensives just to the south and in Champagne, this was to be the BEF's largest effort in the war so far.<sup>17</sup> There were hopes that it would lead to a decisive breakthrough on the Western Front. The Guards Division was one of three divisions in the new XI Corps, which was to be in General Reserve and to be used where necessary on 1<sup>st</sup> Army's front. The Corps' role was to be highly controversial, for its use (or misuse) at the Battle of Loos was to become a major cause of the dismissal of Sir John French, the BEF's Commander-in-Chief.<sup>18</sup>

The Guards, which had been kept under the command of Sir John French when the other two divisions in XI Corps were transferred to the control of Sir Douglas Haig on 25 September, were not ordered on to the battlefield until 27 September. This was two days after 1<sup>st</sup> Army had initially attacked and when the offensive had bogged down. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Brigade attacked at 4pm, under orders to capture Chalk Pit Wood and the mine workings called Puits 14 Bis on the Lens-La Bassée Road.<sup>19</sup> The role of 2<sup>nd</sup> Irish Guards was to secure Chalk Pit Wood. That any of the gains initially made were retained was due mainly to Captain Harold Alexander, the future Field Marshal, who held on to trenches beyond the wood until reinforcements arrived. According to Rudyard Kipling, in achieving that objective he was assisted by Hine, who 'distinguished himself' that day.<sup>20</sup>

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Irish Guards were relieved on 30 September and went into billets near Sailly-Lebourse. After a short rest, on 3 October they moved into the trenches at Vermelles. This was their first tour of "normal" trench duty. Their inexperience was to have fatal consequences. In the early morning of the 6<sup>th</sup>, at first light, 'while No. 3 Company was settling into battalion reserve trenches, 2<sup>nd</sup> (sic) Lieutenant Hine exposed himself over the parapet and was shot through the head, and died almost immediately'.<sup>21</sup> A failure to appreciate the dangers of trench warfare may have been a major factor in Hine's unfortunate and unnecessary death, but contributory reasons were his 'natural fearlessness' and his utter conviction 'that he would not be killed in the war'.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Cuthbert Headlam, *History of the Guards Division in the Great War 1915-1918* (London 1924), p.26.

<sup>14</sup> War Diary, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Irish Guards, TNA PRO WO 95/1220, 17 July 1915.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 16 August 1915.

<sup>16</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *The Irish Guards in the Great War: Vol.2: The Second Battalion* (1923: Leonaur 2007), p.11.

<sup>17</sup> On 24 September, the day before the battle commenced, Lord Cavan, GOC Guards Division, issued a circular in which he wrote that Loos would be 'the biggest battle in the World's History'. Headlam, *Guards Division*, p.34. Cavan was merely repeating the words of his Corps commander, Major-General Sir Richard Haking. Michael Senior, *Haking: A Dutiful Soldier* (Barnsley 2012), p.65.

<sup>18</sup> The best overview of the battle and of the controversy is Nick Lloyd, *Loos 1915* (Stroud 2008). See also, Gary Sheffield, *The Chief: Douglas Haig and the British Army* (London 2011), pp.127-31.

<sup>19</sup> War Diary, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Irish Guards, 25 September 1915.

<sup>20</sup> Kipling, *Irish Guards Second Battalion*, p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> War Diary, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Irish Guards, 6 October 1915.

<sup>22</sup> Kipling, *Irish Guards Second Battalion*, p. 21.

Hine's service records papers do not survive, so it is not possible to discover when his parents received a telegram notifying them of their son's death, but it probably arrived on 7 October. They would have been informed officially at a later date of Hine's burial place, which was Vermelles British Cemetery (they had already received this information from the C.O of 2<sup>nd</sup> Irish Guards). They subsequently had engraved on his headstone: *Inseparable from God*.

Hine's parents received letters of condolence from the battalion. One was from the C.O, Lt-Colonel Hon. L.J.P. Butler:

I must write you a line to tell you that you have the very deepest sympathy from all his comrades in the Irish Guards for the sad death of your gallant son. He was shot early this morning by a rifle bullet through the head, and he died quite painlessly with half an hour. We are burying him in the cemetery at Vermelles, near Béthune. He leaves behind him many sore hearts in the Regiment, for he was always most popular with both officers and men. A more gallant and cheerful soldier, too, I never met. He went into action for the first time on September 27<sup>th</sup>, just about a week ago, and on that occasion he behaved so conspicuously well in keeping men together at a critical moment, that I brought his name to the notice of our Brigadier-General, in the hopes of his gallantry being recognized by the authorities.<sup>23</sup>

Another officer also was anxious to inform Hine's parents of his role during the Battle of Loos:

More especially I want you to know that in the Battle of Loos our Battalion made a great name for itself, and at a critical moment Godfrey did magnificent work rallying our men. His action stood out from amongst all that the other Officers had done and did, and we were all so proud of him, particularly those officers who had been under fire before and had experience of war, realizing the great value of his work.<sup>24</sup>

Many of the letters of commiseration sent to grieving parents from commanders and officers of a battalion follow a set pattern, often descending into cliché. In those sent to the Hale family, however, the central sentiment appears to be genuine. Both Butler and the officer were very keen to demonstrate, by specific example, that, for all his short service in action, Hine did more than expected of him and was a credit to the battalion. There is no evidence, however, that Brigadier-General John Ponsonby passed on Butler's recommendation for some recognition of his gallantry.

It is perhaps not surprising, given Hale's chosen profession, that his parents chose a stained glass window in a church for his memorial. It was also fitting that Hale's mentor, Archibald Nicholson, designed and prepared the window.<sup>25</sup> The window has three lights and is traditional in its conception and subject. The figures represent the three countries associated with Hale's life: England, his home; France, Britain's ally and Hale's place of death; and Ireland, which his regiment represented. On the left is (a rather masculine) St Joan of Arc, with fleurs-de-lys above and below her and a crown representing France as it had been, not as it currently was (a republic). She is holding her sword in the form of a cross, symbolizing sacrifice for Christ (Hale's in France). In the centre light is St Patrick, patron saint of Ireland,

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<sup>23</sup> *Harrow Memorials of the Great War*, Vol. 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Comments on the window in the Imperial War Museum's War Memorials Archive claim that the designer was another Nicholson, William, also a stained glass designer. This is based on the misapprehension that William Nicholson employed Hale. The evidence is in the window, for A.K. Nicholson's name can be found at the bottom right-hand side of the St George light.

in the robes of a bishop and giving a blessing. Below him is a roundel wreath within which is the crest of the Irish Guards. Above him is Ireland's national symbol, the harp of Erin, with two angels either side. In the right-hand light is St George, patron saint of England, on whose helmet is a victory laurel. Above St George are the arms of the English monarchy and below him oak leaves, symbolizing strength and stability.

The memorial window to Hine diverges from the common pattern of patriotism and sacrifice in only three minor ways. First, the dedication is spare; *To the memory of Lieut. Godfrey Hine, Irish Guards, killed in action at Loos October 6<sup>th</sup> 1915*, and avoids the usual preamble "to the glory of God". Second, St George is more passive than in most windows in which he is the representation of patriotism. There is no dragon, symbolizing evil, writhing at his feet. Finally, the harp of Erin usually is etched with a crown atop. In this case it is missing, even though there are crowns above St Joan and St George. This perhaps is a minor political statement at a time when Ireland's position within the United Kingdom was uncertain.

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