

Henry Alfred Hogarth BREN

Born Leeds 21 February 1892 Died France 9 September 1916, aged 24
Lieutenant Prince of Wales' Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians)
4th Battalion (Special Reserve)

Henry Alfred Hogarth Bren came from a family of churchmen and missionaries and this is reflected in his memorial in Holcombe Church.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
HENRY ALFRED HOGARTH BREN
LIEUT LEINSTER REGIMENT
EXHIBITIONER OF ORIEL COLLEGE OXFORD
WHO FELL AT THE STORMING OF GUILLEMONT AND
GINCHY 9 SEPTEMBER 1916 AGED 24
With Christ which is far better

Henry's grandfather, Rev'd Robert Bren (1823-1885) was born in Reading. He married Sarah Jordan Brown (1824-1906) and they went to Ceylon where he worked as a missionary from 1849 to 1858. Their children, Robert (1850-1938), Sarah J (1853-) and Henry Alfred (1855-1930) were born there. Henry Alfred Bren was born in Kopay, Jaffna, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). By 1861 Rev'd Robert Bren was curate of Papworth Agnes church, Cambridgeshire. In 1871 the family had moved to Clarence House, London Road, Reading, St Giles, where he was shown as a clergyman, C of E, a tutor for the Church Missionary Society. They had 9 students of Theology lodging with them in 1881. Robert died in Reading on the 6th October 1885. His widow and daughter continued to live there and his widow and son, Rev'd Robert Bren, proved his Will.

Henry's father, Henry Alfred Bren was curate of St John's Church, Reading in 1881, before moving abroad where he married Georgiana Elizabeth (nee Cole) (1861-1938) on 30 October 1885 in Nasik, Bombay, India. She had been born in Notting Hill, London. Their first child, Robert Bren * (1889-1957) was born in Bombay (now Mumbai) and soon afterwards they returned to Britain where Elsie Muriel Georgiana Bren (1890-1972) was born in Reading, Berkshire.

* Robert was an undergraduate at Oxford and studied Theology before he married Gladys Mary Dawson on 22 June 1918. He enlisted in July 1918 at the age of 30 in London when their address was 13 Crystal Palace Park Road, Sydenham. He had been a member of the Inns of Court O.T.C. He was discharged from military service in February 1919. They had a son, Robert (Robin) Henry Dawson Bren (1919-) who emigrated to New Zealand in 1946 after service in the RAF in WW2.

Rev'd H A Bren and family left Reading and moved to Leeds where they were living at 4 Reginald Terrace, Potter Newton for the 1891 census and for the birth of **Henry Alfred Hogarth Bren**.

Henry Alfred Bren was appointed Principal of St Paul's Church of England Training College, Swindon Road, Cheltenham and is settled there with his family by the 1901 census. His eldest son, Robert, followed him into the church and the younger son, **Henry A H Bren** appears to have been resident at the College in 1911. He matriculated from Oriel College, Oxford in November 1911.

At the time of the 1911 census his mother and siblings, Robert and Elsie M G Bren, are shown at 'Nasik', Holcombe, and that remained their family home until Georgiana Elizabeth Bren's death on 6 January 1938. Note that the house bore the name of the district where the parents married in 1885.

On the outbreak of War **Henry Alfred Hogarth Bren** joined the Public School's Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment and he was a Private in that regiment when he applied for Appointment to a Commission in the Special Reserve of Officers, stating a preference for the 4th Battalion of the Leinster Regiment (Special Reserve).

He was awarded a Temporary Commission on 7th November 1914. His medical record shows him as being tall for the times at 6' 01/2". It appears that he served initially in Ireland for he was admitted to the Military Hospital, Curragh, in October 1915 for 'Nasal obstruction and tonsils', and was declared 'fit for general duties' on 27 January 1916.

He was then attached to the 7th Battalion of the Leinster Regiment and embarked for France on 15th July 1916, but was suffering from Hay Fever by 31st July and admitted to the 7th Stationary Hospital, Boulogne for two weeks, rejoining his unit on 20th August.

The 7th Leinsters were part of the 47th Brigade which launched an attack on Guillemont on the 2nd September 1916. This was successful, taking the Germans by surprise, and Guillemont village was captured.

On the 9th September the 7th Battalion took part in the assault on Ginchy to the north of Guillemont. As the attackers moved forward they were mown down by machine-gun fire from a trench that was thought to have been abandoned. The next day the battalion was withdrawn from the front, having been reduced to 15 officers and 289 other ranks from a total of around 1,000. Ginchy was captured but at the cost to the 16th (Irish) Division of 4,300 casualties at Guillemont and Ginchy.

Rev'd H A Bren received a telegram at St Paul's College, Cheltenham dated 16th September 1916, stating,

' Regret to inform you that **Lieut H A H Bren** Leinster Regiment was missing September 9. This does not necessarily mean killed or wounded. Further reports will be sent when received. Kindly notify Casualties' War Office full name of officer's father.'

A further telegram reached Rev H Bren, St Paul's College, Cheltenham, dated 4th October,

'Deeply regret to inform you that **Lieut H A H Bren** Leinster Regiment previously reported missing 9 October (*clearly error for September -ed*) now reported killed in action. The Army Council expresses their sympathy.'

Revd H A Bren moved to Holcombe to retire. He is shown as resident at Holcombe in the 1919 and 1923 Kelly's Directories for Dawlish, living at 'Nasik', Fordens Lane (the first house on the left entering 'Fordens Lane' from the Teignmouth Road). He died on 3 January 1930.

Wilfrid Miles noted in the British Official History that the defence of Guillemont was judged by some observers, to be the best performance of the war by the German army on the Western Front.

A pause in Anglo-French attacks at the end of August to organise bigger combined attacks, and postponements for bad weather, coincided with the largest counter-attack by the German army in the Battle of the Somme.

Dawlish World War One Project

Joffre, Foch and Haig abandoned attempts to organise large combined attacks in favour of sequenced army attacks and the capture of the German defences from Cléry on the north bank of the Somme to Guillemont from 3 – 6 September brought the French Sixth and British Fourth armies onto ground which overlooked the German third position.

Rain, congestion and reliefs of tired divisions then forced a pause in French attacks until 12 September. (wikipedia)

Commonwealth War Graves entry:

Bren, Henry Alfred Hogarth, Lieutenant, died 9/9/16 aged 24, Leinster Regiment, 4th Battalion attached to 7th Battalion. Son of Revd Henry Alfred Bren and Mrs Bren of "Nasik", Holcombe, Dawlish, Devon. Recorded on Thiepval Memorial Pier and Face 16c. Thiepval Memorial, The Somme, 80300 Authuille, France.

Bren, Henry Alfred Hogarth, Lieutenant, Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians) 4th Battalion, killed in action - Ireland's Memorial Records 1914-1918

Dawlish War memorial inscription: 3 Memorial tablets at St George's Church, Holcombe, Dawlish EX7 0JT

Devon Heritage site info: Not on Dawlish War Memorial.

Last known address: "Nasik", Holcombe, Dawlish

Next of kin: Father, Revd Henry Alfred Bren (ret'd)

References:

Holcombe Church memorials.

CWGC records

Free Birth, Marriage & Death records

The **Battle of Guillemont** (3–6 September 1916) see Wikipedia.

Officer records at the National Archive, Kew

refs via subscription websites:

Census records

National Probate Calendar records

UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War

Ireland's Memorial Records

Patricia Bren (New Zealand) correspondence

Birt family tree (ancestry)

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