

GREAT WAR STAINED GLASS WINDOW MEMORIALS IN KENT

No. 10: St Mary's, Greenhithe

Midshipman Trevor George Lawless Hayles

HMS Defence

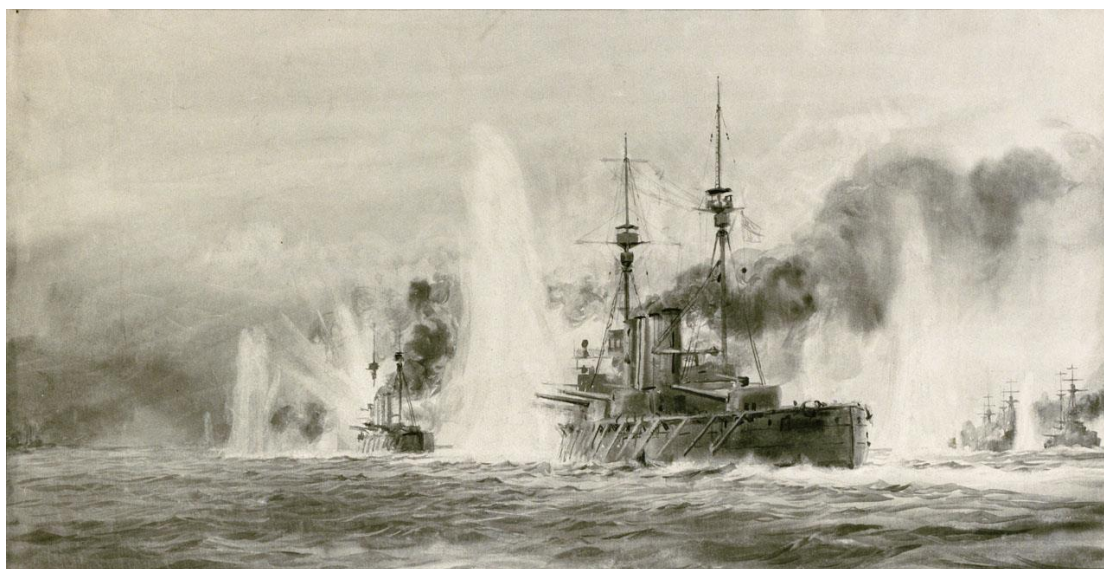
KIA 31 May 1916, Battle of Jutland

Window: St Mary's, Greenhithe

Kent links: Birthplace, Family home

Medals: British and Victory medals

War Grave: Plymouth Naval Memorial



HMS Defence (left) and HMS Warrior at 6.20pm 31May 1916

Source: www.europeana1914-1918en/en/europeana/record/2022362

Trevor George Lawless Hayles was born on 11 March 1900 in Rainham, Kent.¹ He was the only child of Trevor and Millie (née Lawless) Hayles, who had married in Croydon in June 1899. Millie was the daughter of an army surgeon. Trevor Hayles Snr, son of a broker, was at this time an Assistant Paymaster in the Royal Navy based at Southsea.² He was subsequently to spend most of the Great War commanding the General Mess and Cookery School at Chatham, except for a few months from August 1918 when he was posted to the staff of the C-in-C Mediterranean.³ He retired from the navy in 1928, with the rank of Rear-Admiral Paymaster, and served in the Home Guard in 1940.⁴ He and his wife eventually retired to Malta, where they died within months of each other in 1959.⁵

¹ Service Record, Trevor George Lawless Hayles, TNA PRO ADM/196/123.

² Surrey Church of England Marriage Registers, Ancestry.Co.

³ Service Record, Trevor Hayles, TNA PRO ADM/196/82.

⁴ Service Record, Trevor Hayles, TNA PRO ADM/196/172.

⁵ Probate Records, April and June 1959, Ancestry.Co.

Trevor Jr spent his early school years at Cholmeley House, Eastbourne, a small preparatory boarding school. A naval career beckoned, which involved passing a stiff entrance examination as well as receiving a recommendation from a suitably influential person. In 1903 Lord Selbourne and Admiral Sir John Fisher reformed the navy's educational system. The old wooden ship HMS *Britannia*, which served as the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, was replaced by a school on shore, but while this was being completed younger cadets received their schooling at the Royal Naval College, Osborne, on the Isle of Wight. A cadet, starting between the ages of twelve and thirteen, would spend two years at Osborne, two years at Dartmouth and six months on a training cruiser before becoming a Midshipman.⁶ Hayles began his naval education on 1 January 1913.⁷ He would thus have expected to pass out of Dartmouth at the end of 1916 and complete his sea training by the middle of 1917.

The Great War interrupted Hayles' schooling. When war broke out in August 1914 he was still at Osborne. If the war had begun a few months later he would have been at Dartmouth and would have been commissioned into a ship immediately, as happened to Hugh Evans (aka Alan Hillgarth), who was only fifteen years and two months when he joined the elderly cruiser *Bacchante*.⁸ He was at sea on the first day of the war. Nevertheless, Hayles' time at Dartmouth was curtailed and his sea training cancelled. In January 1916, eighteen months earlier than anticipated and still two months shy of his sixteenth birthday, he was appointed Midshipman and posted to HMS *Defence*. HMS *Defence* was a Minotaur class armoured cruiser. It displaced 14600 tons, had a top speed of 23 knots and carried a main armament of four 9.2 inch and ten 7.5 inch guns and five torpedo tubes. It was the last of its class to be built, being completed in January 1909. *Defence* was already obsolescent, for the Admiralty was building the much faster and heavier gunned battlecruisers as its new armoured cruisers by the time it finished its sea trials.⁹

In January 1916 HMS *Defence* was flagship of 1st Cruiser Squadron, flying the flag of Rear-Admiral Sir Robert Arbuthnot. On board were eight midshipmen. By chance Hayles' role on the ship is known. Although one of the youngest midshipmen, he was the 'Admiral's doggie'.¹⁰ Presumably, this meant that he was a dogsbody, doing menial tasks for the Admiral and his staff but at the same time learning his trade. At one time, however, for a short period while the Flag Lieutenant was indisposed, he took on that role in an acting capacity.

Whether the other midshipmen were envious of Hayles' position close to the Admiral is a moot point. Arbuthnot was a notorious 'hard man', a martinet of the old school. Andrew Gordon has given a compelling character sketch of Arbuthnot:

Sir Robert, a Scottish baronet, distended the muscular Christian and authoritarian mores of Edwardian England to the point where he was, in a colloquial if not a clinical sense, insane—although, for sure, even in today's armed forces he would be acclaimed for his combative spirit and, from a safe distance, alluded to vaguely as a sound chap. (He kept his motorbike, lovingly polished, in his day-cabin, and went in

⁶ Jane Harrold, "'From Dartmouth to War': The Midshipman in the First and Second World Wars", www.oceanides-association.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/From-Dartmouth-to-War.pdf. I am also grateful for advice from "seaJane" and "Horatio2" on the Great War Forum.

⁷ Service Record, Trevor George Lawless Hayles, TNA PRO ADM/196/123.

⁸ Duff Hart-Davis, *Man of War: The Secret Life of Captain Alan Hillgarth, Officer, Adventurer, Agent* (London 2012), p.2; Service Record, George Hugh Jocelyn Evans [Alan Hugh Hillgarth], TNA PRO ADM/196/147.

⁹ Richard Hough, *The Great War at Sea 1914-1918* (Oxford 1983), p.244. For political reasons, before 1914 the new *Indefatigable* class of battlecruisers was counted in the fleet as Dreadnoughts (battleships), but they did not have the armour or the firepower to be line-of-battle ships. See Nicholas A. Lambert, 'Righting the Scholarship: The Battle-Cruiser in History and Historiography', *The Historical Journal*, Vol.58 (2015), pp.275-307.

¹⁰ *Hull Daily Mail*, 29 September 1916.

for gruelling long-distance races in which he pioneered falling off as a means of keeping awake.) In him one can discern the most Spartan aspects of [some Victorian senior naval officers], softened by virtually nothing. He was courteous enough at a social level—though his habit of pushing the table aside after dinner and handing out boxing gloves was not to everyone’s convenience—but as a tyrant, bully and physical-training fanatic, Arbuthnot was loathed. . . . A seaman who fell behind on a route march with blistered feet and missed the ship was sentenced to death by him. The Admiralty intervened.¹¹

Perhaps Hayles took this autocratic and blustering eccentricity in his youthful stride. When he joined HMS *Defence* and was told ‘it might be his last as well as his first battle’, he was reported to have ‘cheerfully replied, “I don’t mind that; it is all in the game”’.¹² It was a game, however, in which Arbuthnot failed to follow the rules.

The Battle of Jutland did not begin as a plan to bring the British Grand Fleet and the German High Seas Fleet into direct conflict. Rather, Admiral Reinhard Scheer hoped to tempt the British Battlecruiser Fleet into a submarine trap, using his battlecruisers as a lure. They were to make a sweep along the entrance to the Skagerrak between Norway and Denmark without paying too much attention to security. Unknown to Scheer, however, British naval intelligence was breaking his codes. Sir John Jellicoe, therefore, even though he remained unaware that the German High Seas Fleet of battleships was deploying, had sufficient time to order his main forces to make for sea before Admiral Hipper’s decoy fleet of battlecruisers had done so.¹³

The Grand Fleet left Scapa Flow early in the afternoon of 30 May and Arbuthnot and 1st Cruiser Squadron left Cromarty Firth at about the same time and, as with the rest of the Royal Navy’s ships, avoided the few enemy submarines that had remained on patrol.¹⁴ When Arbuthnot joined the main fleet as it steamed eastwards his force became part of the scouting and defensive screen on the right of the fleet. Meanwhile it was Rear-Admiral David Beattie’s battlecruiser fleet’s responsibility to make contact with Hipper’s ships, cut them off from their base and draw them towards the big guns of the Grand Fleet. This they did on the 31st, although not without suffering several tragic disasters. At about 6 pm the convergence of all British forces began at a point that came to be called ‘Windy Corner’, as the Battlecruiser Fleet, the 5th Battle Squadron and the Grand Fleet with all their support squadrons began to manoeuvre into position to cross the ‘T’ of the German High Seas Fleet, which had followed Hipper’s battlecruisers in pursuit of Beattie. For a while it was chaotic, as there was very little sea room for the myriad ships, big and small, trying to take their positions. The situation was not helped by the sudden appearance of Arbuthnot’s 1st Cruiser Squadron heading towards the enemy at full steam, cutting across the path of Beattie’s battlecruisers and forcing them to break contact.¹⁵

The loss of *Defence* with all hands at the Battle of Jutland at 6.20 pm on 31 May 1916 was probably unnecessary. Why Arbuthnot allowed his ship and HMS *Warrior* of 1st Cruiser Squadron to become caught between the British Grand and the German High Seas fleets and

¹¹ Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command* (Annapolis, MD 1996), pp.392-93.

¹² *Hull Daily Mail*, 29 September 1916.

¹³ Louis D. Rubin Jr, ‘The Continuing Argument over Jutland’, *The Virginia Quarterly Review* Vol. 77 (2001), p.587.

¹⁴ The original German plan collapsed when most of the submarines had to return to home base because of shortage of fuel.

¹⁵ Hough, *Great War at Sea*, p.244.

become the target of the overwhelming firepower of the latter remains unclear.¹⁶ In a battle between titans, ships of *Defence*'s size should have kept well out of the way. In Gordon's words, 'While centre-stage should have been clearing for the leading contenders to engage, here was a supporting actor getting in the way and babbling his own, nonsensical lines'.¹⁷

There are several possible explanations for Arbuthnot's puzzling action. One revolves around the presence of the German light cruiser *Wiesbaden*, which had been crippled by Beattie's battlecruisers and was wallowing helplessly in the eye of the coming storm. When *Defence* sallied forth (and nearly collided with Beattie's flagship *Lion*), followed loyally by *Warrior*, Arbuthnot may have been intending to finish off *Wiesbaden*.¹⁸ Alternatively, he may, on his own initiative, have been intending to create a smoke screen to protect Beattie's ships from further damage as well as hiding the Grand Fleet from the eyes of the Germans for a crucial few minutes. The third possibility was that he was making his way to his allotted position in a fleet battle but deliberately decided to take the quicker but more dangerous route between Beattie's fleet and his pursuers rather than sailing behind the battlecruisers from which he would gain protection.

Some historians have suggested that wounded pride may have been at the root of Arbuthnot's fatal decision to expose himself to the full broadside of the High Seas Fleet. One of the criticisms of senior British officers at the beginning of the war had been that they failed to show personal initiative. Arbuthnot had been reproached when the High Seas Fleet had attacked Scarborough, Whitby and Hartlepool in December 1914 for not firing on the German ships because he had not received an order to do so from a superior officer.¹⁹ He was determined not to be so irresolute in future. In a subsequent conversation with *Lion*'s captain in the Orkneys he had explained how he would fight in a fleet action. His squadron's role in the period before the Grand Fleet deployed into battle line would be on a forward wing of the fleet, but for the actual battle it would be expected to take station in the rear. If in forming up the fleet turned in his direction he would have to travel five miles to take up his position in the rear. He could do this either by sailing down behind the battle line, or by passing in front of the fleet. The impression he gave in this conversation was that, as the former would be 'a dull performance', he would choose the latter (and much more dangerous) option. This is what he did on 31 May but, according to Gordon, Jellicoe's fleet did not turn in his direction but away from him. If he had waited, Arbuthnot's battle position would have been 'coming to meet him at 17 knots'.²⁰ Thus, he could not have been moving into battle position when he precipitately steamed towards the enemy. More likely, he had a point to prove about his capabilities and he sought to wipe away the stain of indecisiveness by going full pelt for the enemy's cruisers. Unfortunately, much heavier enemy battleships came into view as he proceeded and he was caught horribly exposed.

Whatever Arbuthnot's motives, the sudden, almost instantaneous, destruction of *Defence* was seen by numerous horrified onlookers from the many ships close by, both British and German. An officer on the destroyer HMS *Faulknor* noted at the time that 'I do not think that a single officer in our flotilla was able to realise what had happened, although I think that the destruction of this ship was left to all of us as one of the most vivid impressions of the Battle

¹⁶ *Black Prince* managed to escape but sank sometime during the night after being caught by the battleship *Thüringen*. There were no survivors. V.E. Tarrant, *Jutland: The German Perspective* (London 1997), p.203.

¹⁷ Gordon, *Rules of the Game*, p.443.

¹⁸ Of the other two ships in the squadron, *Duke of Edinburgh* and *Black Prince*, were unable to follow Arbuthnot's reckless path. The former was cut off by intervening warships and the latter may already have been hit.

¹⁹ John Keegan, *The Price of Admiralty: The Evolution of Naval Warfare* (London 1988), p.130.

²⁰ Gordon, *Rules of the Game*, pp.443-44.

of Jutland'.²¹ Another officer, on the light cruiser HMS *Galatea* only a few hundred yards from Arbuthnot's ship, had only a few minutes before been admiring *Defence*: 'a fine sight she was. She had apparently been newly painted, and was looking very smart'. He turned away for a moment and suddenly the ship blew up. It was 'all over and finished in an almost incredibly short space of time'.²² Two salvos, the first hitting just abaft the rear turret and the second between the forecandle turret and the first of her four funnels, were the cause of her destruction.²³ This was confirmed by the official German history of the battle, which thought that Arbuthnot's purpose was to sink the *Wiesbaden*.

Everyone at first took [*Defence*] to be the German light cruiser *Rostock*, as no one had expected to see an old armoured cruiser so close to the German line. ... Harder, commanding the *Lutzow*, was, however, certain that she was a British vessel, and ... opened fire at 7.16 and discharged a torpedo at her at a range of 7,700 yards. Simultaneously the *Grosser Kurfürst*, *Markgraf*, *Kronprinz* and *Kaiser* joined in the cannonade. Not until it was too late did Arbuthnot realize the danger of his position. By 7.20 a concentrated and extremely violent fire was raining down on the two armoured cruisers. Salvo after salvo from the German heavy guns fell at the shortest of regular intervals. ... In a moment the *Defence* was enveloped in columns of water from exploding shells. First aft, and then forward, immense flames gushed forth from under the turrets, and then the third of those tremendous catastrophes occurred which in this battle overtook only British ships. With an explosion audible in all the ships of both fleets, the *Defence* flew in the air out of a crater of fire. Soon only a cloud of smoke hung over the water where previously there had been a ship, and no survivor bore witness to the way of her destruction.²⁴

All observers agreed that the crew surviving to the last minute must have died instantaneously. One onlooker who felt a personal loss at the sight of *Defence* exploding was a young midshipman in the battleship HMS *Malaya*. Only minutes before *Defence* was hit and he saw 'only a small space of smooth water where two minutes before had been a ship and her crew of 900 men', he had been thinking of 'the four midshipmen of my term [at Dartmouth] who were in her'.²⁵ This boy was sixteen and four months at the time of Jutland, so he would have been in Hayles' 'term' (and there were four sixteen year-olds on *Defence*).²⁶ It is not surprising that the event 'came as a distinct shock' and that for a few minutes he had 'wind-up'.

As a postscript, in 2001 the marine archaeologist Innes McCartney discovered the wreck of *Defence*. It was not, as some expected, 'atomised', but in two main pieces, with the bow in front of the forward turret broken off. The hull is lying upright on the seabed, which suggests that the explosions in the ship had blown its keel out. Physical evidence also suggests that the final destructive explosion was caused by the detonation of the main magazine.²⁷ It remains an official war grave. Hayles may have died in his first battle, but he helped towards a victory

²¹ H.W Fawcett and G.W.W Hooper, *The Fighting at Jutland: The Personal Experiences of Sixty Officers and Men of the British Fleet* (1921: Rochester 2001), p.135.

²² Ibid, p.137.

²³ Ibid, p.136.

²⁴ Tarrant, *German Perspective*, pp.127, 129. The times given are European time, an hour ahead of British time.

²⁵ Fawcett and Hooper, *Fighting at Jutland*, p.102.

²⁶ The four were Hayles, Malcolm Harris, John D'Urban Scott and Maynell Hanwell. I am grateful to "Horatio2" of the Great War Forum for confirming that Harris, the son of an Admiral, was one of the four.

²⁷ Innes McCartney, 'The Armoured Cruiser HMS *Defence*: a case-study in assessing the Royal Navy shipwrecks of the Battle of Jutland (1916) as an archaeological resource', *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology*, Vol. 41, p.64. See also, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xE4D9O6MvVM>.

that ensured that the German High Seas Fleet, after breaking goal to give its gaoler a bloody nose, returned to its prison and stayed there, its morale slowly rotting.²⁸

For Hayles' parents, the loss of their only child must have been a huge blow. They expressed their grief in two very large and expensive stain glass windows in St Mary's, Greenhithe. One is a memorial window on the east side of the church. The other was on the west side, but a bomb destroyed it in 1945.²⁹ The memorial window is a magnificent five-light design that was dedicated by the Bishop of Rochester on 28 September 1916.³⁰ The dedication reads: *To the glory of God and in memory of Trevor George Lawless Hayles, Midshipman RN, who at the age of 16 was killed in action on the eve of Ascension Day whilst serving in HMS Defence during the Battle of Jutland 31 May 1916.* This is followed by an allusion to the way Hayles died and a Christian acceptance of his fate. *Fear not for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; Thou art mine; when thou passest through the water I will be with thee* (Isaiah XLIII: 12).

Ascension Day in 1916 was Thursday 1 June, the day after Hayles died. The main feature of the centre light of the memorial window refers to this very important day in the Christian calendar (it commemorates Christ's ascension into Heaven forty days after Easter), for it shows the risen Christ, displaying the stigmata, looking down on his eleven apostles as he prepares to leave them on the Mount of Olives (see Fig. 1). On either side of Jesus are two angels holding a scroll on which are the words, *Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing,* which in Acts I: 11 of the King James Version of the Bible continues, *up into heaven?* One implication here is that the Second Coming is not imminent and that one must resign oneself to a long period before reuniting with a lost one. Have faith, however, and reunion will occur.

In the left-hand light are two images, of Jesus as the Good Shepherd (leader of the flock) and of patriotic St George, in medieval armour and with the flag of England (see Fig. 2). In the lower right-hand light is a representation of the Madonna and child, with Jesus sitting on Mary's knee while she reads from a book. This common composition not only reminds us of Hayles' extreme youth but also, with the baby holding a lily, the Christian symbol of purity, of his blameless life. In the tracery are also some youthful cherubs (see Fig. 5). It seems possible that a photo of Hayles himself is used here.

In the right-hand light at the top is another biblical reference to Hayles' loss at sea (see Fig. 3). It shows Christ on a boat with his apostles with the inscription *Peace, Be Still.* This refers to the time when a storm erupted while Jesus (who was sleeping) and his companions were crossing the Sea of Galilee (Matthew VIII: 23-27). Terrified that they would drown, the apostles woke Jesus, who miraculously stopped the winds and calmed the sea (and their fears). This has been interpreted as more than Christ's ability to control Nature; it also has the message that he can calm fears about the fate of souls. Follow Christ and you will be saved. At the bottom of the memorial is the crest of HMS *Defence*, with its motto *Noli Me Tangere* (Do not touch me) (see Fig. 4). Perhaps ironically, this was what Jesus said to Mary Magdalene after she recognised him following his Resurrection (John XX: 17). It links Hayles, his ship and the Christian theme of the memorial window.

There appears to be no surviving record of the composition of the second window dedicated to Hayles that was destroyed during the Second World War, but together these windows would have been the most magnificent of all the Great War memorials in Kent. The replacement window, erected in April 1952, is in a more modern style but still has a nautical

²⁸ The gaol metaphor was a well-known contemporary opinion of the Battle of Jutland. C.J. Hamilton, Review of Keith Yates, *Flawed Victory: Jutland 1916*, in *War in History*, Vol. 11 (2004), p.371.

²⁹ During the time of the V1 (doodlebug) attacks on London, the area around the Thames estuary became known as 'Bomb Alley'. *Sevenoaks Chronicle and Courier*, 23 February 1945.

³⁰ *The Times*, 29 September 1916.

theme, although without any military connotations (see Fig. 6).³¹ Its dedication, from Hayles' parents, is 'In gratitude to God for the gift of their only child Trevor, whom God recalled to Himself during the Battle of Jutland'. Thirty-six years after the calamity of their only child's death they had come to terms with their loss. Their Christian beliefs had sustained them.

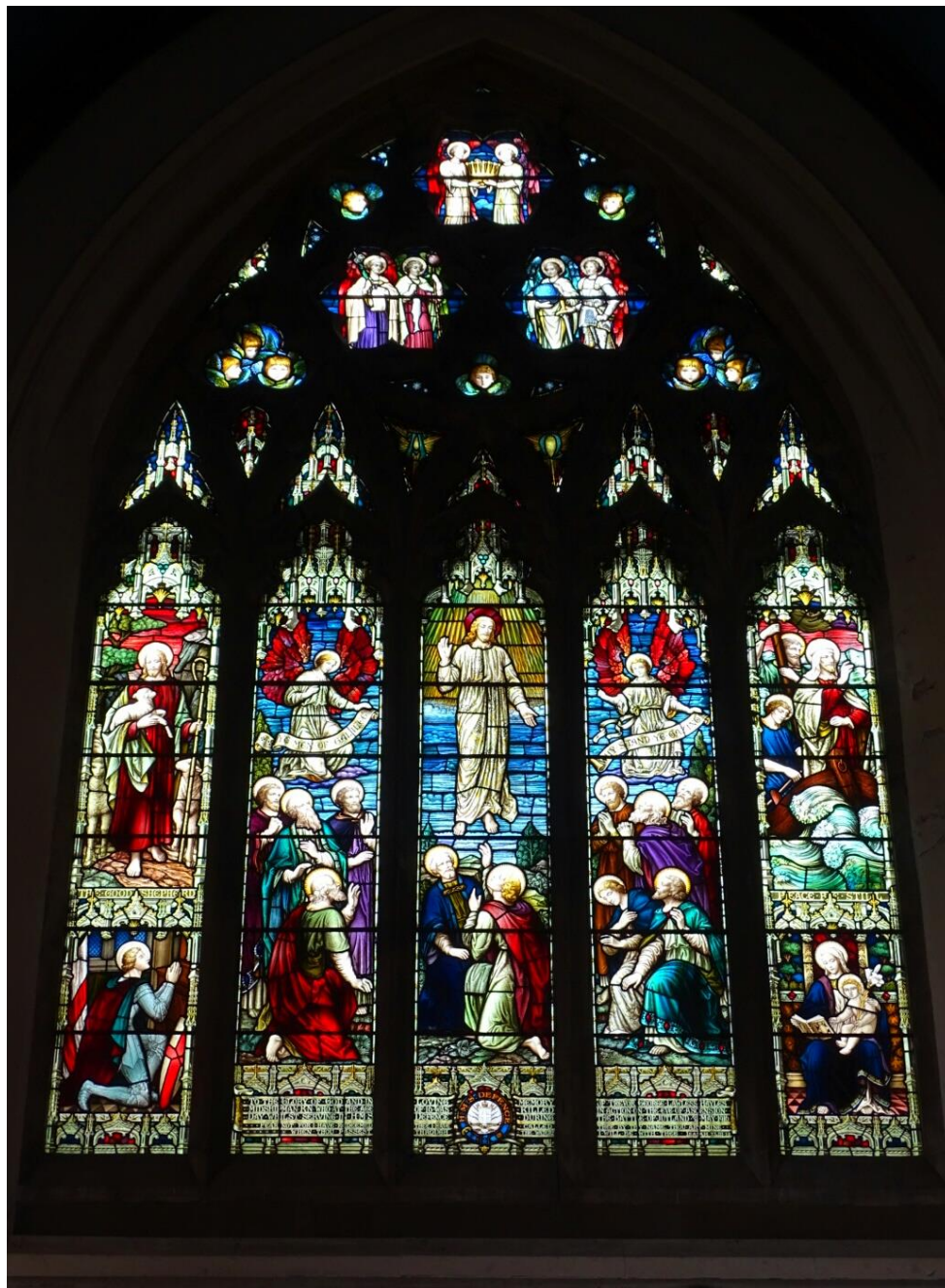


Figure 1: Memorial Window
Copyright: M. Durey & ellesmerecollective.co.uk

³¹ The window was the creation of L.C. Evetts.

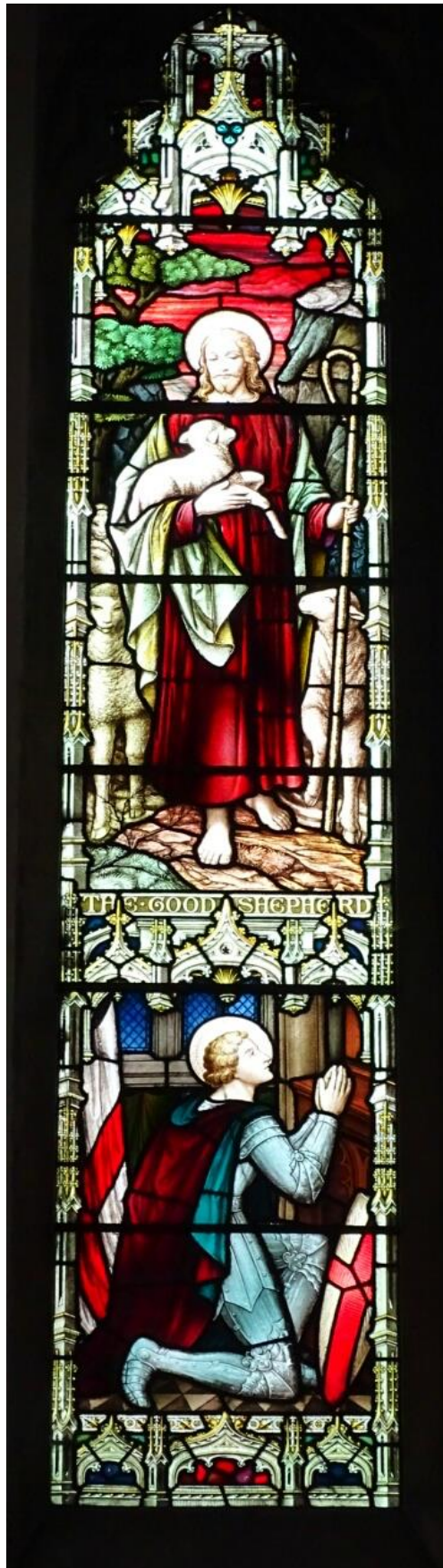


Figure 2: Left-hand Light
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Figure 3: Right-hand Light
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Figure 4: The Crest of HMS *Defence*
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Figure 5: Cherubs
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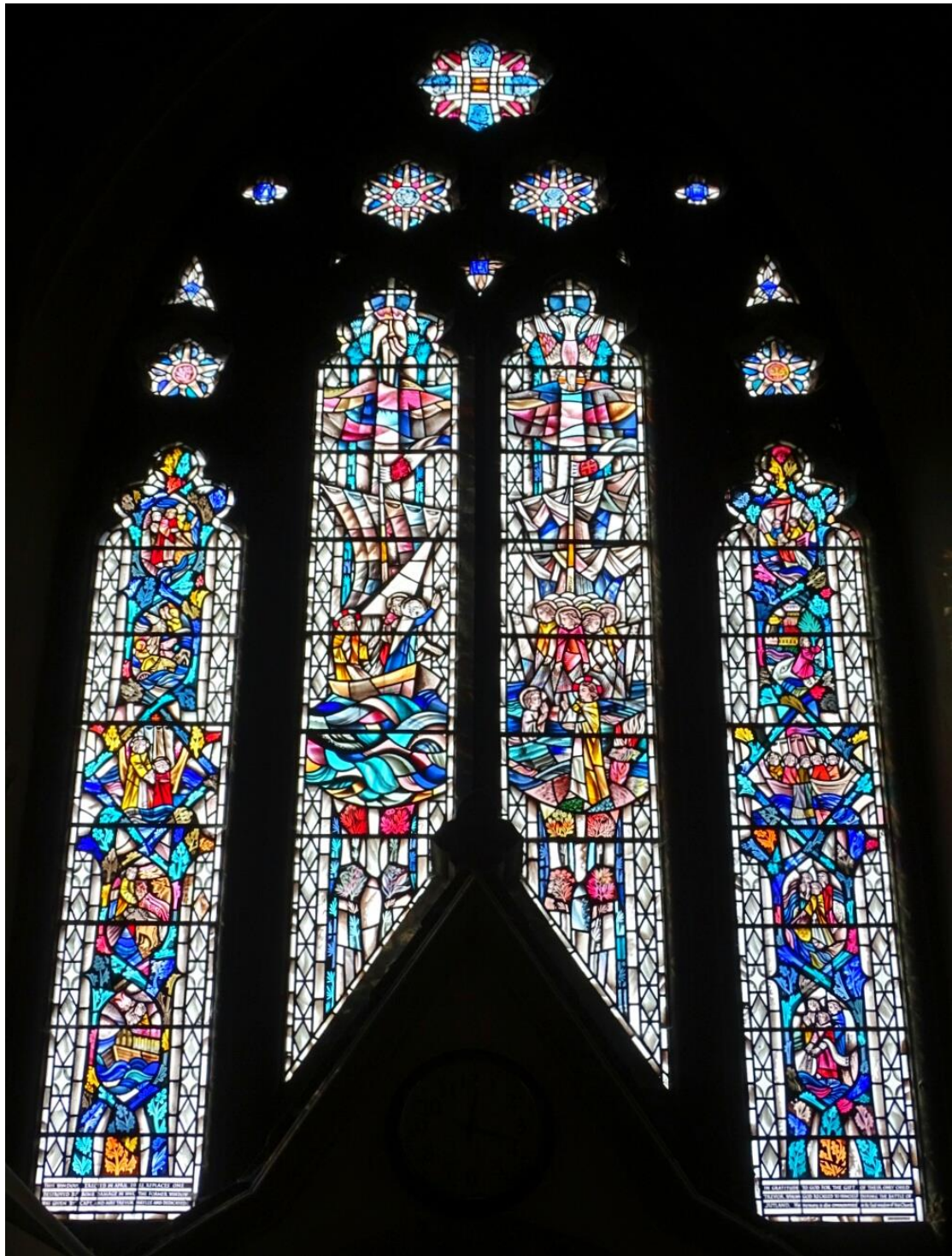


Figure 6: The Replacement Window 1952
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