

Title

Nicholas Hurst - A Family Hero by Lloyd Tomkins



Source: Family Albums

Temporary Second-Lieutenant Nicholas Hurst

This is the story of my great grand-uncle, Nicholas Hurst.

I'm very proud to tell his story.

Nicholas was born on the 12th of July 1896 in Bantry, Co. Cork. He was the second son of Thomas and Mary Hurst, he had 4 brothers and 3 sisters. One of his sisters Jordan Hannah is my great grandmother.

Family Background

Nicholas's grandfather Henry Hurst was a government customs officer and family history tells that he may have moved to Bantry Co. Cork from Hampshire England. When Henry retired from the Customs Officer's position he opened a grocery shop and got a liquor licence. Henry died when he was only 41 and his wife Hannah took over the running of the shop until their only surviving son Thomas was able to take over.

Nicholas's father Thomas Hurst was born 2 months after his father died. When he was 29 he married Mary Shannon. He ran the family shop and had a licence to sell Guinness and was one of the first people to sell it by the bottle as well as on draft. He died of flu and pneumonia in January 1917 at the age of 52.

FAMILY TREE – HURST / TOMKINS

HENRY HURST married HANNAH JORDAN RICHARDS

Henry b. 12/1/1820 m. 22/12/1849 d. 10/4/1864

Had 7 children (Henry, Nicholas, Hannah, Mary, Jane, Margaret & Thomas Robert)

THOMAS ROBERT HURST married MARY SHANNON

Thomas b. 13/6/1864 m. 25/4/1893 d. 8/1/1917

Had 8 children (Henry, **NICHOLAS**, Thomas Robert, Mary, Edwin, **Jordan Hannah**, Francis, Eva)

JORDAN HANNAH HURST married WILLIAM JAMES TOMKINS

Jordan Hannah b. 21/11/1905 m. 15/9/1928 d. 23/3/1993

Had 4 children (William, Valentine, Stanley & Vera)

VALENTINE HENRY TOMKINS married LOUISA ANN MILLS

Valentine (Val) b. 5/2/1933 m. 7/9/1960

Have 2 children (Trevor & David)

WILLIAM JAMES TREVOR TOMKINS married MIRIAM BAILEY

Trevor b. 30/12/1962 m. 21/9/1991

Have 1 child (Lloyd)

LLOYD WILLIAM TOMKINS (This is me)

B. 2/1/2009

b. = born m. = married d. = died

Source: Hazel Vickery, Family

In Nicholas's early life, the 1901 census showed he was living in Bantry with his parents, 2 brothers, sister and granny. They might've been wealthy because they had 2 servants who are listed on the census.

IRELAND CENSUS 1901

Household Members - Members that resided in the household at the time of the census.

First name(s)	Last name	Relationship to head	Marital status	Age	Birth year	Birth place
Thomas Robert	Hurst	Head of Family	Married	35	1866	Cork
Mary	Hurst	Wife	Married	33	1868	Cork
Henry	Hurst	Son	Single	6	1895	Cork
Nicholas	Hurst	Son	Single	4	1897	Cork
Thomas Robert	Hurst	Son	Single	3	1898	Cork
Mary	Hurst	Daughter	Single	1	1900	Cork
Hannah Gordan	Hurst	Mother	Widowed	73	1828	Cork
Elizabeth	Aherne	Servant	Single	24	1877	Cork
Hannah	Cronin	Servant	Single	16	1885	Cork

Nicholas Hurst's Census Details - Details taken from the original census record.

First name(s)	Nicholas
Last name	Hurst
Relationship to head	Son
Marital status	Single
Marital status as transcribed	Not Married
Sex	Male
Age	4
Birth year	1897
Birth place	Cork
Occupation	Scholar
Townland/Street	Wolfe Tone Square
District electoral division	Bantry
County	Cork
Religion	Church of Ireland
Literacy	Cannot read
Image link	http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Cork/Bantry/Wolfe_Tone_Square/1092058/
Family member first name(s)	Thomas Robert, Mary, Hannah Gordan, Henry, Elizabeth, Hannah
Family member last name	Hurst, Aherne, Cronin
Record set	Ireland Census 1901
Category	Census, Land & Substitutes
Subcategory	Census
Collections from	Ireland

Education

He went to the Village School in Bantry, Co. Cork from 1900 to 1905. In the 1911 census it shows he was in Kilkenny College. He was in Kilkenny College with a scholarship from 1905-1911.

IRELAND CENSUS 1911

First name(s)	Nicholas
Last name	Hurst
Relationship to head	-
Marital status	Single
Marital status as transcribed	Single
Sex	Male
Age	14
Birth year	1897
Birth place	Co Cork
Occupation	Pupil
Townland/Street	College Park
District electoral division	Kilkenny No. 2 Urban
County	Kilkenny
Country	Ireland
Religion	Church of Ireland
Image link	http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Kilkenny/Kilkenny_No._2_Urban/College_Park/525706
Record set	Ireland Census 1911
Category	Census, Land & Substitutes
Subcategory	Census
Collections from	Ireland

Source: The National Archives of Ireland

In 1911 to 1914 he went to Mountjoy School again with a scholarship. He played on the Leinster schools inter provincial rugby team from 1913-1915 and was the captain of the 1914 team when they won the Irish Schools Challenge Cup. I think if war hadn't come he may have had a chance of playing internationally!



Source: Family Albums

In October 1914 he won a scholarship to Trinity College, Dublin to study medicine with the intention of becoming a surgeon in the Royal Navy like his older brother Henry. (Henry was a medical surgeon on the H.M.S Hood which was blown up by the Germans in May 1941 in World War 2.) When he was in Trinity he joined the Officers Training Corp and during 1915 he saw Lord Kitchener's advertise "Your Country Needs YOU".



Source: Yahoo.com

Military Career / The British Army

He applied for a leave of absence to volunteer to join the British Army, which was given to him. He was given a temporary commission on 15th August 1915 in the Royal Munster Fusiliers as a 2nd Lieutenant. He received a salary of 25p a day. The Royal Munster Fusiliers were one of the eight Irish divisions. At first he was based in Fermoy, Co. Cork where he did training battalion and did more training courses in Ireland and England and always got excellent reports.



Badge of Royal Munster Fusiliers

Source: Wikipedia/Royal Munster Fusiliers

Nicholas wanted to serve in the British Army in France. In April 1916 he was transferred to the 9th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers. With this transfer he avoided going with the Royal Munster Fusiliers to Gallipoli, Turkey. Luck was on his side as this regiment suffered heavy losses, around 70% of the men were killed/injured. The remaining men of the Royal Munster Fusiliers were sent to the Somme and joined the 16th Irish Division and fought alongside Nicholas and the 9th Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers at Ginchy. It was in recognition of his endeavour here that Nicholas was awarded the Military Cross.



Badge of Royal Dublin Fusiliers

Source: Wikipedia/Royal Dublin Fusiliers

World War 1

Nicholas was with the Allies and fought against the Central Powers. (On 4/8/1914 Germany invaded Belgium and so Britain declared war on Germany for invading their ally Belgium.) When the war began most people thought it would be over by Christmas and many thought Britain's army was so powerful that there would be a quick and decisive end to the war, but it lasted 4 years instead of 4 months.

WW1 was very different to other wars as new powerful weapons were used for the first time and vehicles were used on land, at sea and in the air. In England you could sometimes hear sounds like thunder coming across the channel. It was in fact artillery being fired on the allies. It's estimated that around 15-20 million people died in WW1. The biggest battle of WW1 was the Battle of the Somme, it is known as one of the bloodiest battles of all time. It was fought by the British and the French against the Germans on either side of the Somme. Over one million men died and it lasted for five months.

Fact - The 1918 influenza pandemic, broke out during WW1.



Grave of unknown British soldier near Ginchy 1916

Source: <https://www.pinterest.ie/pin/81838918209935517/nam.ac.uk>

Fact - It was common practice to mark graves with rifles pushed into the ground by the soldier's rifle to help with burial later of the dead soldiers. Sometimes the bodies were blown to bits so no burial could take place and the body was gone forever.

Battle of Ginchy

The Battle of Ginchy started on 9th September 1916 during the Battle of the Somme. The Germans had captured the village of Ginchy and had fought battles to keep control of it. In the early morning of 9th September the British began an attack but waited until evening before advancing. This was to stop the Germans fighting back before dark. In was north of the village of Ginchy that the 16th Irish Division captured Ginchy. Capturing Ginchy stopped the Germans having look-out posts where they could watch the battlefield.



The Battle of Ginchy – 9th September 1916

Source: <https://www.pinterest.ie/pin/32158584817398548/army.mod.uk>



Nicholas in the trenches

Source: Family Albums

Nicholas's own words on the battle:-

"In June 1916 I was sent to BEF in France, and like all reinforcements went to a Base Depot where officers and men trained until posted. My orders were "Join 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers 16th (Irish) Division which was then in the trenches in the Loos Salient. I travelled in a railway wagon with 40 men and 8 horses. On arriving at the railhead I found my way to the Brigade Transport lines. On the night of 3rd September I went with rations and joined my regiment. I took command of 9 Platoon Company and moved with them to the front line in Ginchy on 8th / 9th September 1916. On my first day I relieved 2nd Lt. Martin. Martin looked over the top to point out the location of a sniper and was immediately shot dead. A frightening introduction to trench warfare.

On 8th / 9th September C and D companies dug in between the villages of Guillemont and Ginchy. On the 9th evening a heavy bombardment fell on Ginchy and we went over the top at dusk. There was heavy German machine gun fire and many dead lying about. We captured the village which was now in ruins.

My company advanced a few hundred yards beyond the village and dug in and got under cover before dawn. The night passed quietly as I tried to reorganise my company and send back the wounded.

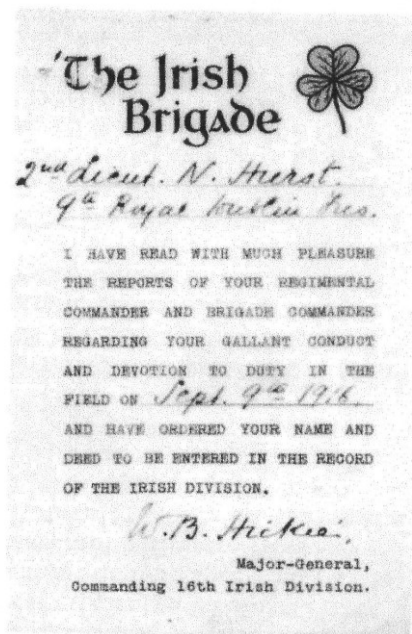
I was the only officer left in C company and there was only one left in D company. We failed to find any units on our flanks and could only muster about 140 men. We managed to get a telephone line through to battalion HQ but had no rations except our emergency tins. All next day we lay doggo with no movement above ground while we improved our defences to meet a counter attack.

We received orders that we would be relieved on night of 10 / 11 September by the Guards Brigade. After dark on 10th a line of silhouetted figures appeared to be advancing towards us in single file. I let them come on only to find they were carrying rations for the German garrison at Ginchy. They offered no resistance and were sent to battalion HQ while we enjoyed their black bread and sausage meat.

After midnight the Welsh Guards arrived with barbed wire, stakes etc and took over. The guides took me and my men back to our battalion HQ which was 2 miles back. Battalion strength was 3 officers and about 160 men. Total losses in excess of 500 men."

Military Cross and Recognition of Bravery

For Nicholas's bravery and commanding leadership he was recommended for a Distinguished Service Cross but was immediately awarded the Military Cross and then promoted to Captain.



Source: Family Albums

MILITARY CROSS



Source: Family Albums

Nicholas received his Military Cross from King George V at Buckingham Palace in November 1916. His father and brother, Henry, went with him.



Nicholas on left, his father Thomas, brother Henry on right – who was medical surgeon on HMS Hood

Source: Family Albums

Campaign - 1914-15 Star

(A) Where decoration was earned.

(B) Present situation

Name	Corps	Rank	Reg. No.	Roll on which included (if any)
(A) HURST	9th R Dublin Lt			MEDAL R DUB F PAGE
(B) N. (M.C.)	2/99 Dublin Lt			VICTORY 27/105 28
NICHOLAS				STAR
Action taken - D.O. 9. Vm. IV. 4202/v. d/1. 6.2 (NW/6/3242)				
Theatre of War - FRANCE				
Qualifying Date - 13.4.16 EF/9/3512 NW/6/3249				
M.S. 3D No RECORD OF MENTION NW/6/3242				

Copy of Nicholas's service record from the National Archives WO 372/10/127165

Source: The National Archives

HURST, Nicholas, M.C., p.s.cf. Born 12/7/96. (Temp. 2-Lt. 12/8/15 to 20/3/18; temp. Lt. 21/3/18 to 11/4/18.) Army. Lt. 12/5/17. I.A. Lt. 12/4/18. (actg. Capt. 1/3/20 to 2/5/20). Capt. 3/5/20. Maj. 3/5/34. Staff Capt. India 12/11/34 to 30/11/36. Brig. Maj. India 1/12/36 to 11/11/38.

Nicholas's service record from the National Archives - Gazette Issue 29793

Source: The National Archives - Gazette

Nicholas's bravery has been told in many books and articles. (An article from the book "The Project Gutenberg eBook of "The Irish on the Somme" by Michael MacDonagh where in chapter 13 it mentions honours and distinctions for the Irish brigade and this is what it says about Nicholas - "Temporary Second-Lieutenant Nicholas Hurst, Royal Dublin Fusiliers. He organized a party to rush 2 machine guns, which were holding up the advance, and when the first party failed, he organized a second, which succeeded. The strong point was captured and 2 officers and 30 men made prisoners.")



Article printed in local paper in Bantry, Co. Cork in 1916
name of paper not known

Source: Family Albums



Second Lieutenant Nicholas Hurst

Regiment: [9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers](#)

Date published: 24/11/1916

Killed in action: No

Information: Second Lieutenant Nicholas Hurst, 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was awarded the Military Cross, and parchment certificate signed by Major-General Hickie, Commanding the 16th (Irish) Division, for gallant conduct and devotion to duty in the field on September 9th last for successfully organising a party which rushed two machine-guns and took two officers and 30 men prisoners. He is a son of Mr. Thos. R. Hurst, Bantry, Co. Cork, and got his commission from the Trinity College O.T.C.

Article above taken from the paper Southside News newspaper

Life after the Battle of Ginchy

When World War 1 was over, Nicholas was commissioned into the Indian Army with the Gurkha Regiment. He rose to the rank of Brigadier Major and retired from India when the British handed over to the Indian Government. While in India he was involved in the Waziristan campaign 1919–1920 which was a military campaign by the British and Indian forces against the tribesmen that inhabited this region. During this campaign Nicholas was given a military cross bar.

Nicholas and his family returned to England in 1948. While in India in 1937 he married Joan Welchman and they had 3 children, Anna, Cynthia and Nicholas. Nicholas and Joan lived in Hampshire, returning to the area where his grandparents and previous generations had lived. Joan died in 1983. Nicholas died in the Royal Star and Garter Home in Richmond, London on 10th June 1985.

A brave man, a true hero whose story needed to be told.

I'm honoured that I can tell his story.

BILIOGRAPHY

Photographs from Family Albums

Family Tree from Hazel Vickery, Family

Photographs from Pinterest army.mod.uk and nam.ac.uk

1901 Census from National Archives of Ireland

1911 Census from National Archives of Ireland

Image of Lord Kitchener "Your country needs You" from Yahoo.com

Image of badge for Royal Munster Fusiliers from [en. Wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Munster_Fusiliers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Munster_Fusiliers)

Image of badge for Royal Dublin Fusiliers from [en. Wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Dublin_Fusiliers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Dublin_Fusiliers)

Newspaper article from Southside News newspaper

The National Archives reference WO372/10/127165 – service record

The National Archives Gazette issue

The Project Gutenberg eBook of "The Irish on the Somme" by Michael MacDonagh in chapters 12 and 13