

Frederick Vincent Hall, died in action on 15 May 1918, aged 20

Frederick Vincent Hall – known to his family as Vin – was the only child of Frederick Hall, a solicitor, and his wife Florence. He was born on 20 March 1898 at 30 Station Road in Finchley and baptised four weeks later at St Paul's Church in Long Lane. Soon after this the family moved to Muswell Hill Road and they lived there throughout Vin's childhood. At this time the family attended All Saints' Church in East Finchley. Vin was educated at Highgate School and then Eastbourne College. In July 1916 he was gazetted as a Flight Sub Lieutenant in No 10 (Naval) Squadron of the Royal Naval Air Service. He spent a couple of weeks at Crystal Palace before being sent to the Royal Naval Air Station at Chingford, and got his flying certificate there on a Grahame-White Biplane on 1 December 1916.

After further training on Sopwith Pups Vin was posted to No4 Naval Squadron on 26 April 1917. The French town of Dunkerque was suffering many aerial attacks from German planes, and early on the afternoon of 2 May Vin Hall and his observer (Wing Commander Newbury) were searching for a German Albatross plane flying at high altitude over Dunkerque and Bergues. Watched by many residents of Dunkerque they engaged the German plane, scoring several hits, and it fell to ground killing both the pilot and the observer. The local paper recorded the event in graphic detail over three days, and noted that the two British officers came to salute the bodies of their opponents before their removal. In gratitude for their action in protecting the town of Dunkerque, Vin and Wing Commander Newbury were awarded commemorative medals by the Mayor.



Frederick 'Vin' Hall, taken from the memorial book published by Vincent Hall's parents. A copy of this is held in All Saints' Church.

Vin had been reassigned to No 8 Naval Squadron on 5 May, and was shot down on 23 May which meant he had to spend some weeks in Chatham Hospital requiring treatment for bullet wounds in his leg. He was therefore unable to be present in person to receive his medal, and its whereabouts are now unknown. However, the Mayor of Dunkerque graciously issued a replacement medal in 2017, and this can be seen on the South Aisle wall.

After his recovery Vin rejoined No 10 Naval Squadron flying Sopwith Camels, and was very active over France and Belgium, engaging amongst others with the notorious Baron von Richtofen. When Vin was told by his parents of the death of his old schoolfriend Max Seaholme, in action on 30 March 1918, he asked them to erect a memorial to Max.

The RAF was formed from the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service on 1 April 1918. Vin's squadron was renamed No 210 Squadron, and he was given temporary promotion to Captain. He had a total of seven successes in aerial combat making him an 'ace', before his luck ran out and he was killed on 15 May 1918, possibly in collision with another Camel during combat.

Vin is buried in Ebbingham Military Cemetery on the edge of a wood outside Hazebrouck. This is a very small cemetery, and like so many others in that area it was originally a casualty clearing station. Vin's gravestone bears the inscription *For whom we give thanks to God*. His parents fulfilled their son's request and erected a memorial plaque in All Saints' to Max Seaholme, together with one to their son, and they are both included on the parish memorial. After their son's death the Halls moved to Tiptree in Essex, and Vin's name is also recorded on the village war memorial there as well as on Eastbourne College's Roll of Honour, and on his paternal grandfather's gravestone in Hull.



In the London Gazette of 1 January 1919 Flight Lieutenant F V Hall was Mentioned in Despatches.

After the war Vin's family published some of his letters and his flying log in a memorial book, and a copy of this is held in the RAF Museum in Hendon. There is a facsimile in church near to his memorial plaque.