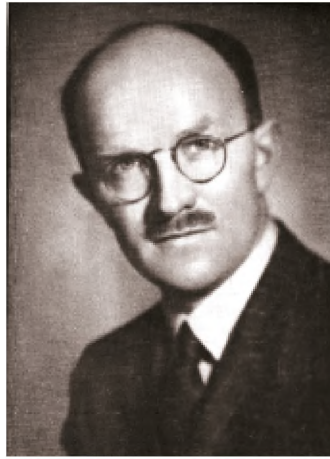


RICHARD N. HAILE – PHOTOGRAPHER

David Evans

The English photographer Richard Haile was born in 1895 and spent almost all his working life in the small Sussex town of Bognor Regis. In 1929 the area was chosen by King George V's medical advisers for his convalescence, leading to the award of the 'Regis' suffix to its name. The actor and comedian Clarkson Rose (1890-1968),¹ who regularly appeared in productions in Sussex, described Haile in *The Stage* magazine of 15 October 1936:



1. Richard N. Haile



2. Bognor Regis by Hale

"Although I know he's there, I am always surprised when I find that Richard N. Haile is still in Bognor, and his establishment 'The Sign of the Ikon' is as artistic and beautiful as ever. I'm surprised because, as most people know, Richard Haile is one of the ace photographers in the kingdom – and the president and Pooh Bah of all sorts of institutions connected with his art. And in his case it is art with a capital 'A'. This week one of his windows contained a perfect rugged study of Tommy Rose, and the other a gem of gentle portraiture in a head of Diana Churchill. Big-wigs from all over the universe go to Richard Haile, and there is little wonder, for his work is that of a master. One always feels that hidden away in Bognor Mr. Haile needs discovering, but one has only to look through his albums to find out that nearly everybody famous has thought the same."

Haile (Fig. 1) was a Fellow of the Institute of British Photographers, a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and President of the Institute of British Photographers in 1935-36. He contributed art studies at exhibitions organised by the Royal Academy of Arts, London, the Pastel Society, the Royal Photographic Society, London International Salon, the Institute of British Photographers and many more. His book *Composition for Photographers*, first published in 1936, was still being reprinted in 1952.² He took portraits of many famous people including Sir Winston Churchill.

His letter heading (in 1937) describes his specialities (see Fig. 3):

RICHARD N. HAILE A.R.P.S.
Portrait Photographer and Miniature Painter
59 HIGH STREET & 1 LENNOX STREET
BOGNOR REGIS

Exhibitor: Royal Academy of Arts, London Salon International & Royal Photographic Society Exhibitions, etc.

The Hailes seem to have been on good terms with Norman Blinkhorn A.R.P.S. of 5 South Bar, Banbury, Oxfordshire, who had just been nominated National President of the Professional Photographers' Association for 1937 (Haile had been President for the previous two years) and who had exhibited three prints at the Association's exhibition at the Royal Institute Galleries in Piccadilly, London in that year. Haile wrote to Blinkhorn on 30 April 1937 (Fig. 3):

Dear Norman

I should like to congratulate you on the result of your Cine planning for Congress.

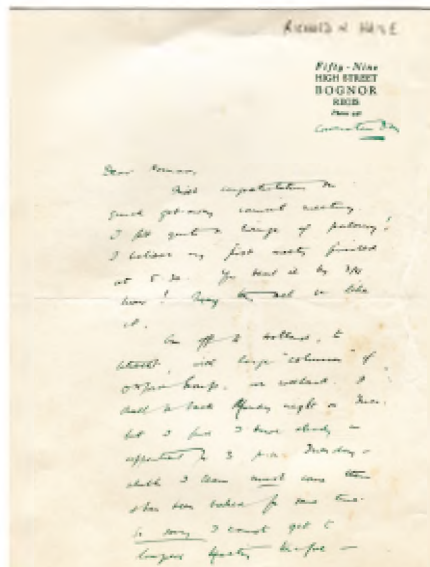
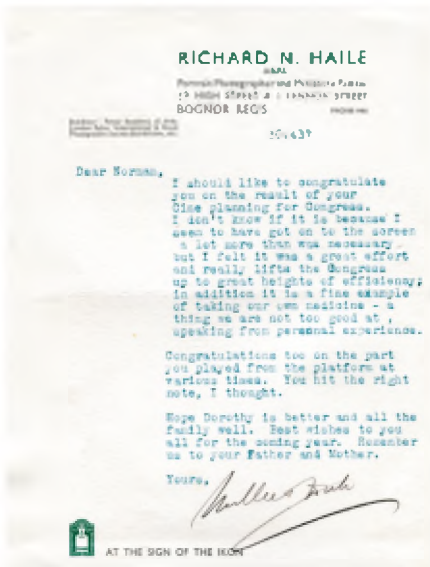
I don't know if it is because I seem to have got on to the screen a lot more than was necessary but I felt it was a great effort and really lifts the Congress up to great heights of efficiency; in addition it is a fine example of taking our own medicine – a thing we are not too good at, speaking from personal experience.

Congratulations too on the part you played from the platform at various times. You hit the right note, I thought.

Hope Dorothy is better and all the family well. Best wishes to you all for the coming year. Remember us to your Father and Mother.

Yours (signed)

Richard Haile again wrote to Norman Blinkhorn on Coronation Day in 1937 (Fig. 4) – King George VI and Queen Elizabeth were crowned on 12 May:



3. Letter from Haile to Norman Blinkhorn (1937) (far left)

4. Letter from Haile to Norman Blinkhorn on Coronation Day 1937 (left and above)



5. Richard and his wife leaving their shop at 59 High Street, Bognor, where they were located from 1927 to 1938.



6a, b and c. The new shop at 1 Lennox Street, Bognor. They were there from 1937 on, and it appears that they also used the building next door, as Haile's Ikon sign is hanging from that too.



Dear Norman

First congratulations on quick get-away council meeting! I believe my first meeting finished at 5.30. You beat it by $\frac{3}{4}$ hour! May they all be like it.

Am off to Holland, to Utrecht, with large 'column' of Oxford snaps – over weekend. I shall be back Monday night or Tues.

Hope all goes well with opening enquiries.

Best wishes to Dorothy & yourself.

Yours

Dick Haile

A series of magic lantern slides in our collection (Figs 5 to 11) illustrates the Haile shop front and details of his processing laboratory and storage facilities.



8. Two views of the darkroom, the second (right) with Richard's daughter Joan developing some prints



7. The studio interior



9. Joan displaying a case of decorations and other accessories in the studio



10. Joan in the image store room

Richard Neville Haile was born on 14 November 1895 in Fulham, London, the second of five children of Cornelius Haile (owner of a grocery shop and cheesemonger) and his wife Jane.³ In the 1901 Census the family are found living 'over the shop' at 314 North End Road, Fulham; by 1911 they had moved to a private house in Parsons Green, with Richard still attending school. He left school (South Western Polytechnic Secondary School, Chelsea) in 1912, aged 16, to join his father's business. It's not clear whether he saw military service during the First World War, but in the third quarter of 1918 he married Clara Amelia Seymour, the daughter of a monumental mason, and possibly settled in her native Bognor around that time. What led him into photography as a career is unclear – perhaps this was a hobby which turned into a business. In the 1939 Register (an emergency wartime census) Haile was resident at 59 High Street, Bognor, his occupation still being

'photographer' (in the same source his wife Clara is shown as 'Proprietress Art & Craft Shop'), and he was still living there in 1946. He probably retired at some point in the 1950s, and then lived in London (28 Hyde Park Place, 1958-60) and at 53 Nyewood Lane, Bognor, until he died there on 20 February 1968. Clara died at the same address on 5 June 1974.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Rose was a principal comedian who graduated from concert party appearances to producing his own long running show *Twinkle*. He had first played the dame in pantomime and was later to become Dame for the Melville Brothers at the Lyceum (1936-38). The year before this engagement he had appeared in a Royal Command Performance as Dame. He gave his last pantomime performance in 1967, the year before he died in Eastbourne, Sussex.
2. These lessons were first published in the Institute of British Photographers' *Record* and initially appeared in book form in 1936. Haile organised his text into five chapters – on tone, line, the frame, principles and application, and 'qualities of a good picture'. Accompanying the five plates by the author (including a tipped-in frontispiece) are many small diagrams and reproductions of paintings by Dürer, Rembrandt and others.



11. *The studio lighting*



12. *Richard's art study of Joan, used as the frontispiece for his book.*

3. This biographical outline is from the standard British genealogical sources available at www.ancestry.co.uk. Thanks to Richard Crangle for help with researching these details.