

8: Ralph Blake

Basic Information [as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC]

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Ralph Blake
 Rank: Sapper Recorded by CWGC as a Corporal
 Battalion / Regiment: 1st/9th Bn. The King's (Liverpool Regiment)
 Service Number: 350008 Date of Death: 31 July 1917 Age at Death: 26
 Buried / Commemorated at: Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Ypres (Ieper), West Flanders, Belgium
 Additional information given by CWGC: The son of Ralph and Mary Blake, of 7, Brook St., Llanarmon-yn-Yale, Mold, Flint.

Ralph Blake jnr was the penultimate child (the eighth of nine), and second son, of farmer Ralph and Mary Blake.

Ralph Abram Blake (born 19 August 1854 in Rainhill, Lancashire), 24, married Mary Catherine Thomas, 24, at St Paul's, Tranmere, on 11 May 1878. Ralph was described as a bookkeeper and Mary was recorded as the daughter of architect Thomas Glegge Thomas of Tranmere.

Ralph and Mary's first child, Janet Mary, was born in mid-1879 in Tranmere and in the 1881 census the family was living in Liscard where Ralph was a leather merchant's clerk:

1 Springfield View	1	Ralph Blake	Head	Mar	26	Leather Merchant's Clerk	Lancashire Rainhill
		Mary do.	Wife	Mar	27		Cheshire Tranmere
		Janet do.	Daughter		1		do do

1881 census (extract) – 1 Springfield View, Green Lane, Liscard

Ralph Blake	26	leather merchant's clerk	born Rainhill
Mary	27		born Tranmere
Janet	1		born Tranmere

The growing family was living in north-east Wirral until about 1885 when they moved to the Llanferres area, between Ruthin and Mold. In 1891 they were still living in this area of Denbighshire and it is believed that Ralph was born there on 3 December 1891.

The family was in the same area at the time of the 1901 census when the last child, Henry, had been born but by the time of the 1911 census the family had returned to Wirral and were living at Parkgate in one of the Dee Cottages on Parkgate Parade, near the present-day Boathouse (previously known as the 'Pengwern Arms', demolished in 1885 after suffering extensive storm damage).



Sketch of the Pengwern Arms [Source: <http://www.nestonpast.com/parkgate-regattas/>]

Ralph Blake	Head	Mr	36	Farmer		X	Lancashire Rainhill
Mary	Wife	Ms	37				Cheshire Tranmere
Janet Mary	Daughter		11				do do
Eliza Catherine	Daughter		9				do Egremont
Ethel May	Daughter		8				do Tranmere
Herbert	Son		6				do do
Annie	Daughter		4				Denbigh Llanferres
Martha Emily	Daughter		3				do do
Florence Mary	Daughter		2				do Llanarmon
Ralph	Son		3 months				do Llanarmon

1891 census – Bron Adda, Llanarmon, Ruthin

Ralph Blake	36	farmer	born Rainhill, Lancashire
Mary	37		born Tranmere
Janet Mary	11		born Tranmere
Eliza Catherine	9		born Egremont
Ethel May	8		born Tranmere
Herbert	6		born Tranmere
Annie	4		born Llanferres, Denbigh.
Martha Emily	3		born Llanferres, Denbigh.
Florence Mary	2		born Llanarmon, Denbigh.
Ralph	3 months		born Llanarmon, Denbigh.

Born to middle-class parents (his father, Richard Thompson Blake, was recorded several times as a 'Gentleman' and his grandfather had been a soap manufacturer of Oxton) Ralph Blake snr changed occupation several times and, although described as a 'farmer' for much of his working life, was recorded as a general shopkeeper in 1906, but a 'retired farmer' in the 1911 census.

It is known that Annie was born 8 April 1886 at Tydraw Cathole, Mold, when Ralph described himself as a 'Gentleman'.

Ralph Blake	Head	Mr	46	Farmer		Lancashire Rainhill
Mary do	Wife		47			Cheshire Tranmere
Martha do	Daughter	S	13			Denbigh Llanferres
Florence do	Daughter	S	12			do Llanarmon
Ralph do	Son		10			do do
Henry do	Son		7			do do

1901 census (extract) – Banhadlan Ganol (near Yale Cottage), Llanarmon-yn-Yale, Ruthin

Ralph Blake	46	farmer	born Rainhill, Lancashire
Mary	47		born Tranmere
Martha	13		born Llanferres, Denbigh.
Florence	12		born Llanarmon, Denbigh.
Ralph	10		born Llanarmon, Denbigh.
Henry	7		born Llanarmon, Denbigh.

As Ralph's Service Record with The King's (Liverpool Regiment) has not been found there are few details of his military career or circumstances of his death although it is known that he enlisted in Birkenhead and that he died on 31 July 1917 when serving with the 1/9th Battalion. Although recorded in Neston Parish Church as a Sapper - referencing a previous service with the Royal Engineers (2nd Line Cheshire Field Company) - he is recorded by the CWGC as a corporal.

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.													
Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.													
The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.													
NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE (last Birthday) and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE				PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards				BIRTHPLACE of every person	NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country	INFIRMITY
of every Person, whether Member of Family, Visitor, Boarder, or Servant, who	State whether "Head," or "Wife," "Son," "Daughter," or other Relative, "Visitor," "Boarder," or "Servant."	For Infants under one year state the age in months as "under one month," "one month," etc.	Write "Single," "Married," "Widower," or "Widow" opposite the names of all persons aged 15 years and upwards.	Completed years the present marriage has lasted. If has less than one year write "one."	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)
(1) passed the night of Sunday, April 2nd, 1911, in this dwelling and was alive at midnight, or													
(2) arrived in this dwelling on the morning of Monday, April 3rd, not having been enumerated elsewhere.													
No one else must be included.													
(For order of entering names see Examples on back of Schedule.)													
1	Ralph Blake	Head	57	Married									
2	Mary Blake	Wife	58	Married	33	9	9						
3	Ralph Blake	Son	20	Single									
4	Henry Thomas	Son	17	Single									
<p>(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)</p> <p>I certify that— (1) All the ages on this Schedule are entered in the proper sex column. (2) I have entered the names and families in Columns 3 and 4 separately, and have compared them with the total number of persons. (3) After making the necessary enquiries I have completed all entries on the Schedule which appeared to be defective, and have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.</p> <p>Initials of Enumerator: <i>ESB</i></p> <p>Total: Males: 3 Females: 1 Persons: 4</p>													
<p>(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)</p> <p>Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (Kitchens, Tenements, or Apartments). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom, nor warehouse, office, shop.</p> <p>I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.</p> <p>Signature: <i>Ralph Blake</i> Postal Address: <i>Parkgate, Cheshire.</i></p>													

1911 census (condensed) – Parkgate [It is known that this was one of the Dee Cottages on Parkgate Parade]

Ralph Blake	57	retired farmer	born Rainhill, Lancashire
Mary	58		born Higher Tranmere
Ralph	20	wheelwright's apprentice	born Llanarmon, Denbighshire
Henry Thomas	17	joiner's apprentice	born Llanarmon-yn-Yale, Denbighshire

Ralph and Mary had been married for 33 years and all nine children were still surviving.

It is believed that Ralph, and his brother Henry, were employed by Messrs. J Fleming & Co., contactors, of Neston. Ralph enlisted initially as a Sapper with the 3rd Coy. Royal Engineers on 5 October 1914 when, recorded as a joiner, he was aged 22 years 7 months. His Service Number then was 642 but he remained with the unit for only 138 days before being discharged as being medically unfit with a *defective action of the heart - it is not likely that this man will become an effective soldier on account of the complaint from which he suffers.*

Despite this, Ralph managed at some later date to re-enlist and serve with The King's (Liverpool Regiment).

The 1/9th Battalion The King's (Liverpool Regiment) was a Territorial Forces which, on the outbreak of war, was stationed at Everton Road, Liverpool, as part of the South Lancashire Brigade of the West Lancashire Division. On 13 August 1914 they moved to Edinburgh, then to Tunbridge Wells before being mobilised for war on 13 March 1915.

The troops landed at Le Havre and transferred to the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Division but on 12 November 1915 transferred to the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Division where they were engaged in various actions on the Western front including The Battle of Aubers and The Battle of Loos.



Dee Cottages, Parkgate, probably sometime before 1905 (when the Sawyer's Arms (beyond the car) reverted to a dwelling house).

On 7 January 1916 they transferred again, now to the 165th Brigade of the 55th Division and during 1916 were involved in The Battle of Guillemont, The Battle of Ginchy, The Battle of Flers-Courcelette and The Battle of Morval. During 1917 the Battalion was engaged in The Battle of Pilckem Ridge (31 July - 2 August), the opening attack of the main part of The Third Battle of Ypres (often known as Passchendaele), and it was on the first day of this encounter that Ralph Blake was killed by shellfire.

On Saturday 21 July 1917 the 9th Battalion left their quarters at Moringhem and moved to 'B' Camp at Brandhoek to complete their training for the forthcoming offensive. On 29 July most of the troops moved to bivouacks at Durham Redoubt, just west of Ypres and on the following day they were issued with spare water bottles, iron rations, bombs, maps and flares. Towards the evening the men left the area and, as darkness fell, took up positions in and around the Oxford Trench where they were shelled continuously during the night. The Oxford Trench, being very wide and shallow, offered little protection and a number of casualties were sustained. The primary objective of the 9th Battalion, once the offensive began, was the Stutzpunkt Line which comprised the zone from the Pommern Redoubt (or *Gartenhof*) to Bank Farm, a distance of 1½ miles from their starting position. Around two hours before zero hour the Allied artillery began firing gas shells onto the German artillery in order to disable their crews.

The primary objective of the battle was to gain control of the ridges south and east of the Belgian city of Ypres; Passchendaele lay on the last ridge east of Ypres, 5 miles from a railway junction at Roulers, which was vital to the supply system of the German 4th Army. The British attack began at 3:50am on Tuesday 31 July; the attack was supposed to commence at dawn but a layer of unbroken low cloud meant that it was still dark at that time. The main attack of the offensive, by II Corps across the Ghelvelt Plateau to the south, confronted the principal German defensive concentration of artillery, ground-holding and Eingreif divisions. The attack had most success on the left (north), in front of XIV Corps and the French First Army. In this section of the front, the Entente forces advanced 2,500–3,000 yards up to the line of the Steenbeek stream. In the centre of the British attack, XVIII Corps and XIX Corps pushed forward to the line of the Steenbeek to consolidate and sent reserve troops towards the Green and Red lines (on the XIX Corps front), an advance of about 4,000 yards. Group Ypres counter-attacked the flanks of the British break-in, supported by all available artillery and aircraft at about midday. The German counter-attack was able to drive the three British brigades back to the Black Line (the second objective of the assault was marked on the maps as a black line) with 70 percent losses, where the German counter-attack was stopped by mud, artillery and machine-gun fire. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Passchendaele]

At the commencement of the assault the 165th Brigade, consisting of the 1/5th and 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiments), advanced towards their objective with little resistance and the attack was taken up by the 1/7th and 1/9th King's (Liverpool Regiments).

The 1/7th were held up at Square Farm on the Divisional boundary, causing problems for the advancing 10/11th Highland Light Infantry of the 46th Brigade (15 Division), however the 1/7th persevered finally taking the farm and many prisoners. The 166th Brigade advance consisted of the 1/5th King's Own Royal Lancs. and the 1/5th Loyal North Lancs.; they quickly encountered heavy machine gun fire not silenced by the heavy allied artillery. However these two Battalions managed to stay in touch with the creeping barrage. The attack was taken up by the 1/5th South Lancs. and the 1/10th Liverpool Scottish would experience strong resistance around the fortified farms and they were unable to take their objectives; this resulted in heavy casualties. The whole attack was taken up by the 164th Brigade which was in support, with all the final objectives being achieved, the 1/4th King's Own Royal Lancs. managing to capture 5 batteries of 77mm field guns on their way. Captain Noel Godfrey Chavasse (1/10th Liverpool Scottish) VC and Bar was wounded in the attack later dying of wounds received.

[Adapted from <http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~dccfarr/3rd%20Ypres.htm>]

For the night of Monday 30 July 1917, and the actions on 31 July when Ralph Blake was killed, the 1/9th Battalion War Diary records:

*July 31st Headquarter Details A/RSM Roberts, D
 Sgt Tralker, G.F*

July 30 1917 OXFORD TRENCH

The Battalion objective was the BLACK LINE from C.24.b.35.55 to D.19.a.40.45. The forming up trench was OXFORD TRENCH Battalion Headquarters being in the Cart Dugout. All dispositions were completed by about 2.30AM – the first wave was composed of C. Company on the left (LEFT) and D. Company under 2nd Lieut. Ebbels in rear to mop up in PLUM FARM and APPLE VILLA. B. Company was in support and A. Company in reserve.

At 3.0AM tea was issued and the leading wave got out of OXFORD TRENCH and lay in front of it. Zero hour was fixed for 3.50AM when the 5th and 6th King's would leave to attack and capture the German Front Line System and consolidate the BLUE LINE.

The night was quiet, and the Battalion had got into position without casualties. At 3.50AM the barrage started and the 5th & 6th KING'S left the trenches. Our leading waves left OXFORD TRENCH to take up their position in WARWICK TRENCH. At 4.20AM the Battalion started - it was very dark and difficult to pick up landmarks - no news had yet come in from the 5th & 6th KING'S. Four minutes after ZERO, the enemy put a heavy barrage of H.E. Shells on OXFORD TRENCH - Several men were hit there, a Lewis Gun team was knocked out, and the reserve Lewis Gun ammunition blown up. The Aid Post in PAGODA STREET had previously been blown up and the wounded had to be dressed in the open trench. No news came in for a long time, but numbers of German prisoners were seen coming over to our lines. At 6.30AM Capt Atkinson, Lieut. G.W. Harrison, 2nd Lt Lees and A/RSM Roberts went over to establish Headquarters at JASPER FARM. No news was received from the 5th, 6th or 9th until 7.30AM when a runner returned from Capt Atkinson bringing messages from the front line Companies and supports. Capt Richer reported that he had reached his objective but was in need of reinforcements - Capt ROBERTS reported that he had crossed the STEENBEKE with from 6 to 10 men, another message following immediately said that he had reached BANK FARM. 2nd Lieut GELDERD reported that he had reached his final objective with seven (7) men.

Headquarters then proceeded, first to UHLAN FARM, and then to a dugout near JASPER FARM. A message was then received that 2nd Lieut ELLAM had reinforced 2nd Lieut GELDERD with fifty (50) men and that all were consolidated. A runner reported that D. Company had been held up by Machine Guns on both flanks but the men who had been temporarily held up were rejoining their Company in small parties. At this time the enemy was shelling his old front line system, NO MANS LAND and as far back as POTIJZE very heavily with 77MM, 4.2, 5.9 and 8 inch shells in addition to high-bursting shrapnel. In the vicinity of JASPER FARM there were five (5) Tanks, most of which appeared to be derelicts.

A message was received at 9.30AM from 2nd Lieut EBBELS who with his Platoon was at APPLE VILLA saying that the enemy was massing on HILL 35 - at the same time the 164 BRIGADE who were to attack the GREEN LINE began to pass JASPER FARM. A verbal message was received saying that Lieut FAUSSET had been killed and 2 Lt BARKER wounded. 2nd Lieut RAWCLIFFE was slightly wounded. At 11.45AM Orders arrived from the Brigade that all available men were to be sent up to the BLACK LINE and that we were to be reinforced by two (2) Companies of the 6th Kings.

Major HOARE then went forward by PLUM FARM to BANK FARM and the POMMERN REDOUBT to see what the situation was - at PLUM FARM there were several wounded and Lieut HARRISON established an Aid Post there in a concrete dugout. BANK FARM had been captured by this Battalion although it was really in the sector allotted to the 166 Brigade. A German machine gunner on the roof of a concrete dugout had caused us many casualties - in carrying out the attack on this gun Lieut FAUSSET who led the party was shot through the heart - a Tank arrived at the critical moment and shot the machine gunner who had been firing his gun up to the last minute and was now lying dead on the roof of the dugout - surrounded by hundreds of empty cases. Capt. ROBERTS had also come up against BANK FARM whereupon 2nd Lieut GELDERD seeing that the leading Companies were going too far to the left (LEFT) attacked the POMMERN REDOUBT with six men, one of them being a signaller armed with a shutter. Unaided they captured about 40 prisoners. Then 2nd Lieut ELLAM arrived with B Company and the number of prisoners was increased to about 90 (ninety). The enemy was quite demoralized and running in crowds over the crest line of HILL 35. 2nd Lieut RANDALL had led an attack on a party of Germans who started bombing our men on their left flank as they were digging. At BANK FARM Capt ROBERTS saw a party of Germans lying in a trench - he immediately rushed towards them shouting as he raised his hands above his head "Hoch, hoch, hoch" - the enemy at once stood up and also putting up their hands replied "Hoch, hoch, hoch" and surrendered.

During the attack on the POMMERN REDOUBT, Corporal JAMES CLARK discovered an enemy Machine Gun team trying to take their gun out of action - he immediately shot one of the gunners, put the remainder to flight and caused them to abandon their gun. At the same place Lance Corporal J. MARCHBANK organized a bombing squad and worked his way down an enemy trench - this squad although only seven (7) strong took twenty (20) prisoners. Private F. FOWLER also displayed great gallantry in bombing the enemy and when his supply of bombs was finished he used German bombs. Through his efforts at least a dozen prisoners were taken.

The Companies were re-organized and were consolidating a line from BANK FARM to the POMMERN REDOUBT - this was being heavily shelled from 11AM till 4 PM. Company HQ were established in a Dugout at BANK FARM on the roof of which was the Machine Gun which had caused so much trouble. This dugout had been the Headquarters of an Artillery Officer believed to be a Colonel who was taken prisoner by Sergeant Williams. A number of maps and papers were taken here and sent down to the Brigade. Battalion H.Q. were now established at PLUM FARM. About 4PM reports began to come in that things were not going well with the 164 Brigade in front of us and that it was falling back but for some time no confirmation of this was forthcoming.




Company Commanders were warned to be ready to meet a counter attack - at this time the situation was very obscure - the day had been dark and misty and it was impossible to see anything clearly. Some distance away on the left parties of Germans could be seen some of them apparently

advancing with their hands up - what had happened on the right flank we did not know. FREZENBERG we believed to be in our hands as the enemy appeared to be shelling it. Further reports came in that 164 Brigade was falling back - small groups of men appeared to be coming back over HILL 35 but there was still no sign of a general withdrawal. The Battalion however was "standing to" ready to meet a counter attack - an artillery officer came in during the evening and reported that the 164 Brigade had retired and the enemy were holding HILL 35 in force. An operation order arrived from the Brigade directing a general closing up on the BLACK LINE but this involved no change in our own dispositions - it ended by saying that the BLACK LINE was to be held at all costs - it was followed later by another ORDER directing that the 164 Brigade was to be relieved that night. All efforts were now being directed to bringing up supplies and every man at BATTN. H.Q. who could be spared was put on this job. The shelling was now very violent all round PLUM FARM. A party of 20 (twenty) had been sent for from the FRONT LINE to carry up water etc. - in less than half an hour all but three (3) were casualties, eight (8) of them being killed.

NIGHT During the night the 164 Brigade retired over the BLACK LINE and rain fell heavily.

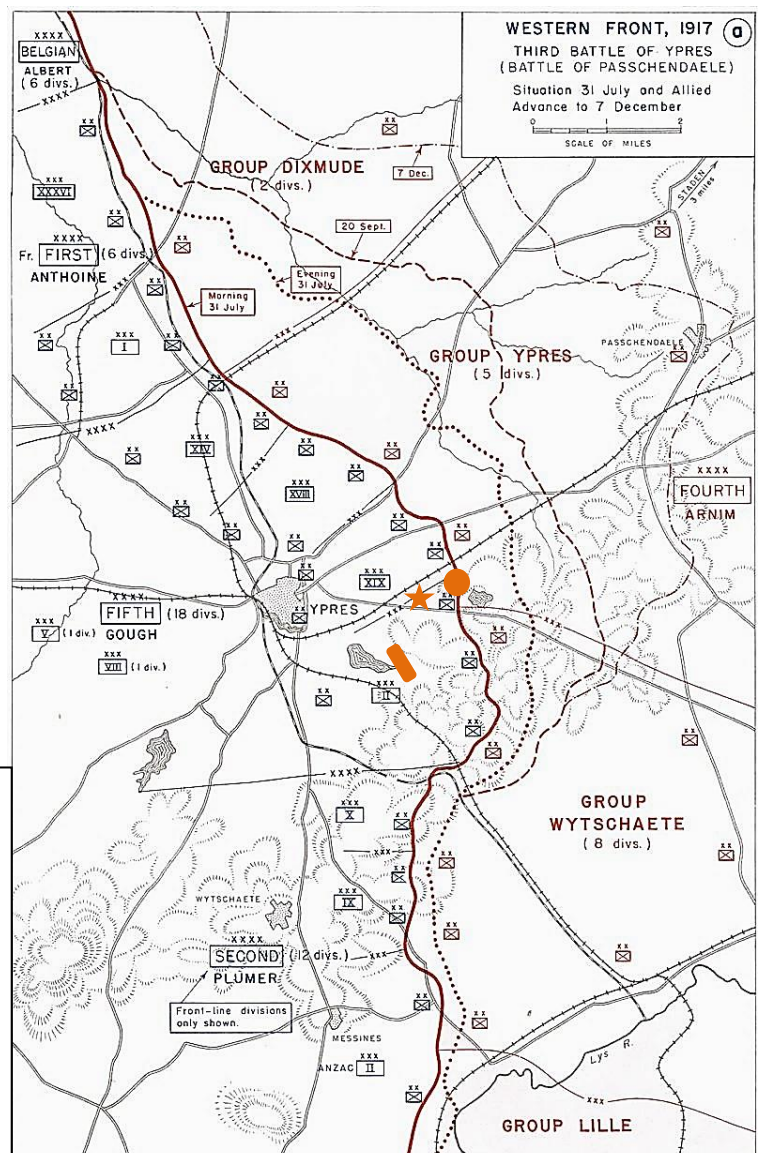
AUGUST 1 At daybreak parties of men could be seen round two (2) derelict TANKS on the crest of HILL 35 but it was uncertain whether these were enemy or men belonging to the 164 Brigade. Rain fell heavily throughout the day and the ground was in very bad condition especially in the VALLEY of the STEENBEKE - the trenches were full of water and the sides beginning to crumble in. The men had had no rest and no shelter but they were holding on to the position cheerfully; they were however being heavily shelled.

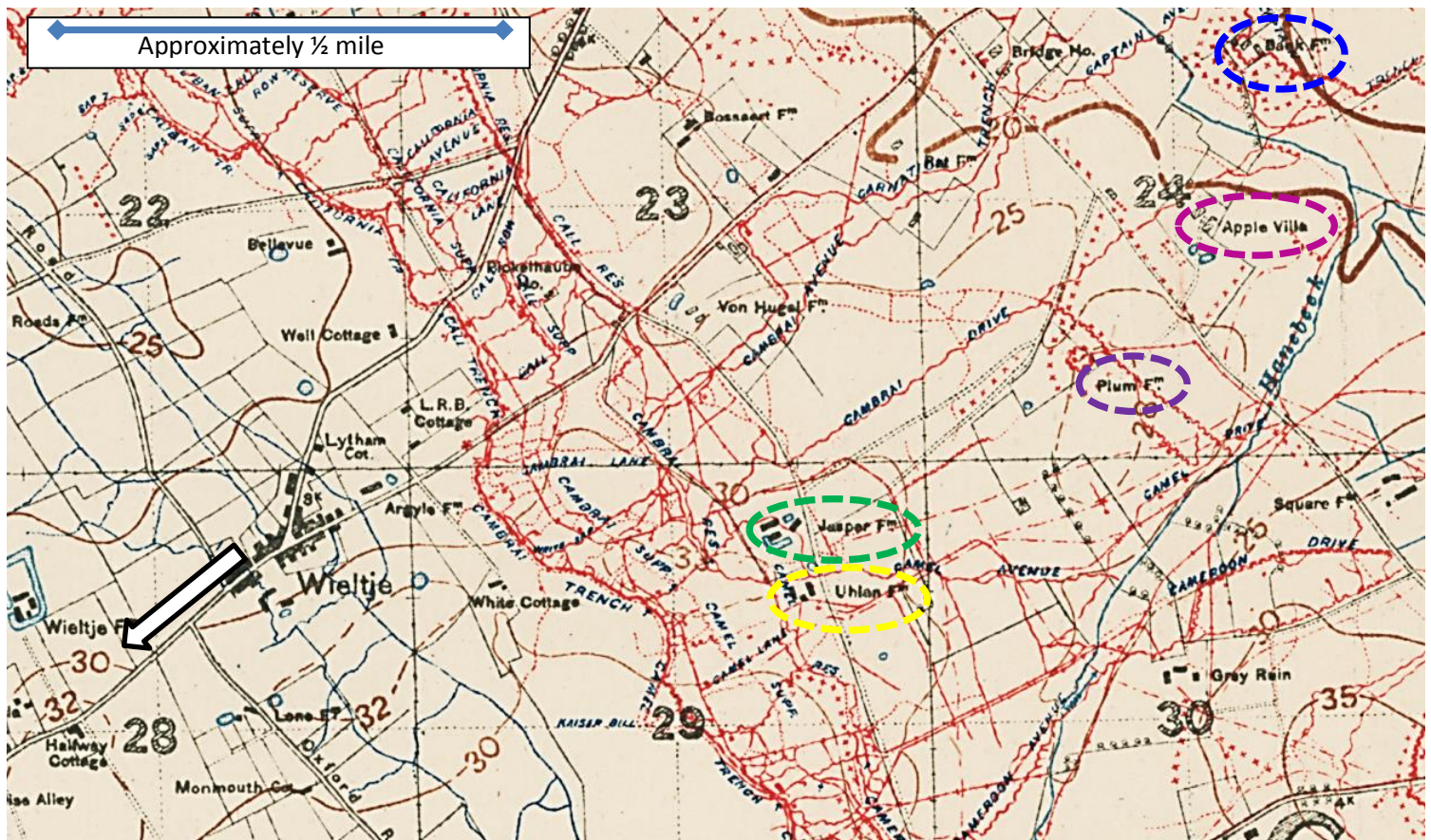
In the afternoon most welcome supplies arrived from the transport. Headquarters' rations had been lost in coming across NO MANS LAND and H.Q. had so far subsisted on one tin of lobster and half a loaf of mouldy German bread discovered in PLUM FARM. Shelling was very heavy in the evening and during the night. [The Diary entry for 1 August continues further].

The generalised front line positions from the morning of 31 July 1917 (solid line) and the approximate positions of Oxford Trench , Jasper Farm  and Pommern Redoubt . Plum Farm appears to have been located just to the north west of the Pommern Redoubt.

[Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Passchendaele]





The British and German positions on 30 June 1917 to the north-east of Ypres. This was just one month before Ralph Blake was killed. On this map the British trenches in the west are coloured blue and the German trenches are in red. Oxford Road lies immediately to the west of the front line British trenches. The locations encircled, mentioned in the War Diary extract, are: Jasper Farm - green : Uhlan Farm - yellow : Plum Farm - purple
Apple Villa - mauve : Bank Farm - blue

The arrow (west) indicates the direction of Ypres, about 2 miles to the south-west of Wieltje.

[Source: <http://digitalarchive.mcmaster.ca/islandora/object/macrepo:34>]

It is estimated that Third Ypres cost the Allies about 300,000 casualties (35 men for every metre gained - many of them were lost to the mud of Flanders and have no known grave, only to be commemorated on the Menin Gate and Tyne Cot Memorials to the missing) and the Germans a further 260,000 casualties.



The Battle of Pilckem Ridge: Crossing the Yser Canal at Boesinghe, 31st July 1917
[Source: www.iwmprints.org.uk]

British wounded at the Battle of Pilckem Ridge 1917 [Source: commons.wikimedia.org]



The notice in the *Echo* records the family at 'Pengwern' - probably the name of their cottage in Parkgate - and Llanarmon, so it is possible that they had two properties.

Certainly, the address of the family recorded by the CWGC was 7, Brook St., Llanarmon-yn-Yale, Mold. Interestingly, *Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919* records Ralph jnr's residence as being both Parkgate and Wigan so it is possible that Ralph jnr moved to the Wigan district sometime after the census of 1911.

BLAKE—July 31, killed in action, aged 26 years, Corporal Ralph Blake, second son of Ralph and Mary Blake, of "Pengwern," Parkgate, Cheshire, and Llanarmon. Mold.

Liverpool Daily Post - Friday 17 August 1917

Record No.	Registry No.	Soldier's Name	Regiment, Rank, No.	Date and Place of Death	CREDITS			CHARGES			Date of Authority	To whom Authorised	Amount Authorised			No. of List in which advertised
					Account and Date	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	Account and Date	£	s.	d.	
548211	425707	Blake Ralph	49 Cool Regt. Belgum 350008	31.7.17 Belgum	Pay 17.	16	16	1	16	16	1	m.o. 1.15.17	16	16	1	
												2.19.17 La Ralph	10	10	-	
						10	10	-								

Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929

In June 1919 the army paid outstanding credits – mainly remaining wages – to soldiers or, in the case of those who had died, their family or nominated representatives. At the same time a War Gratuity was often paid.

Ralph Blake had accrued a credit of £16 16s 1d and this was received by Ralph's father, Ralph snr. Ralph snr received also the £10 10s War Gratuity. The total payment, £27 6s 1d, is approximately equivalent to a *labour value* (ie wages) of about £4200 in 2016.

The War Gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to be made to those men who had served in WW1 for a period of 6 months or more home service or for any length of service if a man had served overseas. The rules governing the gratuity were implemented under Army Order 17 of 1919 but the amount paid was related to the length of war service.

Ralph Abram Blake, Ralph's father, died in the Ruthin area in early 1936 aged 81. Mary Blake, Ralph's mother, also died in the Ruthin area in April / June 1945 aged 91.

Some details are known for six of Ralph's brothers and sisters:

Ethel May Blake - in 1911, aged 27, was recorded as a 'Mission Sister engaged in Religious Work' and lodging at 24 Shore Head, Huddersfield where she had a 'separate room and provides own food'.

Herbert Blake - married Catherine (Kate) Tallon at Toxteth Park in late 1910. They

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
BLAKE	Lpool R	Cpl.	350008.
Ralph.			
834 Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	H/2/102498116	do.	
BRITISH	do.	do.	
STAR			
Theatre of War first served in			
Date of entry therein			

British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920



Ethel May Blake



Herbert & Catherine Blake in late 1922

seem to have had one child, Harold Ralph Blake, born in Bangor in 1912.

Annie Blake - married Frederick John Hall Gregory on 5 November 1906 at St James' RC church, Colchester. She was then working as a domestic servant at The Oaks, Lexdon Road,

Colchester. They had one child, Frederick William Gregory who was born 25 December 1906, shortly after their marriage. He married a Margaret O'Neill and died in Blackburn on 1 March 1975.

Frederick John Hall Gregory served with the 1st Battalion King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment) and was killed in action, aged 29, on 26 August 1914. Annie's address was given as 105, Hannah St., Collyhurst, Manchester.

Martha Emily Blake - in the 1911 census was recorded as a general domestic servant, 23, born Gwernymynydd, Flintshire, in the household of cinematograph proprietor John Frederick and Florence Clemantina Wood at 8 Clifton Road, Birkenhead. She married Albert E Adamson in Birkenhead in late 1917 and died, aged 68, in mid-1949.

Florence Mary Blake - in the 1911 census was recorded as a domestic servant (private house) in the service of shipping cashier Richard and Lillian Mary Reynolds at 162 Prenton Road West, Birkenhead. Her age was recorded as 22 and she was born at Bronadda, Flintshire.



Henry Thomas Blake

Henry Thomas Blake - having served his apprenticeship as a joiner in August 1914 he enlisted in the 439th Field Company of the Royal Engineers in the 53rd Division and saw action in Mesopotamia, Palestine and then on the Western Front until he was gassed. Demobilised in 1919, he returned to Llanarmon-yn-Yale. Moving back to Birkenhead he married Isabella Douglas in late 1919 and, whilst still in Birkenhead, had three children (Ralph Douglas Blake, born 1921; Elizabeth Blake, born 1924; Henry Thomas Blake, born early 1928). Isabella died in Birkenhead in early 1964 aged 69. Shortly following Isabella's death, Henry died in Birkenhead in April / June 1964 aged 70.

Additional information on the Blake family adapted from:

http://mikespages.weebly.com/uploads/3/6/2/0/3620244/the_blake_family_of_scotland.pdf