



ROAD NAMES – BLAKE AVENUE



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Registered address: The Green Centre, Wat Tyler Country Park, Pitsea Hall Lane, Pitsea, Essex SS16

Arthur Giles Blake, Sub-Lieutenant (Pilot)

If you take a wander over to Gloucester Park Estate where the old swimming pool was you will come across the following road name – “Blake Avenue”. The question is where did this name come from. Well! Percy Hood member of the Western Front Association, Southend Branch decided to write to the developers and suggest they name some of the roads after WW2 Pilots. The developer agreed to consider the suggestion. So, Percy sent them details of six WW2 pilots and they chose Arthur Giles Blake



Arthur was born in Northumberland on the 16 September 1917, one of eight known children of John Henry Laws Blake and Mary Jane Blake (nee Carson). The couple had married in 1892. Arthur's siblings included: Edith Jane Blake (born in 1893), Nora Garson Blake (1894-1983), Lydia May Blake (1897-1976), Doris Elizabeth Blake (1904-2005), John Henry Laws Blake (1907-1979) and Margaret Olga Blake (1909-1979). Arthur's father was at one time a commercial traveller for an asbestos company.

Arthur was educated at Slough Grammar School, he joined the Windsor Rugby Club and in 1936 the Eton Excelsior Rowing Club, In 1934 he joined Naylor Brothers of Slough, then in 1938 applied for commissions in the Royal Navy, with a view to flying in the Fleet Air Arm. He was offered Short Service Commission, entering Greenwich Navel College for basic training and then attended Pilots' Course No. 6 from 2 May 1939 as Midship men (A). He passed through the Royal Navel College, Greenwich and gained his wings in January 1940.

In late August he was posted to RAF's 20 EFTS, Gravesend, followed by 1 RTS, Netheravon, in early November. He gained his pilots' badge in march 1940 and was posted to HMS Raven at Southampton, for deck landing and other training with 759 and then 760 Squadrons. In June 1940 Arthur was serving at H.M.S. Daedalus in Hampshire when he was transferred from the Royal Navy to the Royal Air Force, one of 58 naval pilots loaned to the R.A.F. during the Battle of Britain.

He was initially posted to 7 Operational Training Unit to learn how to fly the Spitfire and subsequently was drafted to 19 Squadron, first at Duxford, Cambridgeshire, where he was given the nickname 'Admiral'. Later he served from Duxford's satellite airfield at Fowlmere, Cambridgeshire.

On 3rd September Blake damaged a Me110, on the 9th he destroyed a He111, on the 15th he destroyed a Me109, shared a He111 and damaged a Do17 and on the 17th he destroyed two more Me109s.



Arthur is the one in the middle

Arthur was acting as weaver during a patrol over South London on 29th October 1940, when he was shot down and killed, probably picked off by a Me109. His Spitfire, P7423 and marking QY-Y flew on for some time before crashing in at Oak Lodge in New London Road, Chelmsford at 5.12pm

Sub Lieutenant Blake had taken off with eleven of his squadron at 4.15 pm to patrol over Kent. It was his third patrol of the day. Earlier the squadron had been airborne from 10.40 am to 12.10 pm and 1.30 pm and 3.15 pm to patrol on a line between Maidstone and Sheerness during which no enemy aircraft had been seen. During his final patrol comrades in 19 Squadron spotted seven Messerschmitt Bf 109 aircraft above them but they were unable to engage them. It is thought that one or more of the Bf 109's, which had probably participated in an afternoon raid on North Weald Aerodrome, swept down and attacked his aircraft in which Blake was appeared to be doing a search behind the Squadron. This might have been as a 'weaver', a rather outdated tactic to be carrying out at this stage of the Battle of Britain. As the RAF were adopting a much looser formation based around a pilot and his wingman, two pairs being a standard unit. A weaver however was the practice of a lone pilot flying behind the Squadron formation looking out for the enemy. A very dangerous role.

It is likely that Sub Lieutenant Blake was killed at his controls during the attack and before his stricken aircraft crashed because it was observed from Chelmsford to make several loops before a final plunge from a southerly direction into Oak Lodge, probably passing over Prince's Road and Moulsham Street in its final moments.

The Spitfire collided with the front north-east corner of Oak Lodge (then number 65 but given the number 216 in 1953). The property, which was occupied at the time by the 586 Army Field Company of

the Royal Engineers, was badly damaged by the impact of the aircraft. The front corner of the property, including a box room, scullery, cellar, toilet, coal shed and garage was completely destroyed. The kitchen fireplace and stove were damaged as was the kitchen door and frame. Windows were broken, one chimney stack was severely cracked and one partially demolished. Most of the internal walls and ceilings were cracked. A wash basin and toilet were smashed. There were a few tiles off the roof and service pipes damaged. Damage was also inflicted on the staircase, hall doors and windows, and the wall between the scullery and hall was badly damaged. A small fire was started but that was soon extinguished.

Outside, telephone wires and water mains were broken and the boundary wall with Fairleigh, the neighbouring house to the north, was partially destroyed. Fairleigh also suffered damage to slates and guttering of its sun room, three ceilings partially collapsed and one or two windows smashed.

The first reports of the incident were made to the A.R.P. authorities three minutes after the crash with a report of a Spitfire crashing in flames in Chelmsford. Ten minutes later, at 5.25 pm the location was reported as near to The Cricketers pub in Moulsham Street). At 5.37 pm the exact location of Oak Lodge was reported and the fact that aircraft and house were on fire, with the fire brigade and police on the spot. At 5.50 pm, as dusk closed in, the next report stated that the aircraft fire was out and the pilot presumed dead. It also confirmed the closure of New London Road between Cherry Tree Corner (the junction with Writtle Road and Elm Road) and the Rising Sun pub. At 7.35 pm a final report stated that the remains of the pilot had been removed to St. John's Hospital in Chelmsford and that New London Road had been re-opened.

Sub Lieutenant Blake was subsequently buried at St. Mary's Church in Langley near Slough., Berkshire (row 13, grave 3). Arthur's father died in 1942; his mother in 1968.

In addition to the road name on the afternoon of Sunday 23rd October, 2016 at 3.30pm in St John's Church, Moulsham, a service of Commemoration in memory to Sub/Lt Arthur Giles Blake was conducted by Rev. Canon Carol Smith. In the presence of Sub'/Lt Blakes nephew, Mr Keith Powell, the Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Lord Petre, other dignitaries and guests, along with the congregation, Arthur was remembered and honoured. At the end of the service those present assembled as a plaque, Faculty granted was unveiled and blessed before the Last Poste was sounded.



The plaque reads: -

*Sub Lieutenant Arthur Giles Blake
On October 29th 1940 Sub Lieutenant Blake,
on loan from the Fleet Air Arm to the Royal Air Force,
Was flying with No. XIX Squadron from Duxford when they engaged*

*With seven Messerschmitt's in the skies over Chelmsford.
Shortly afterwards the crippled Spitfire was seen smoking badly,
Heading across the Essex countryside.
Its dive steepened as it approached Chelmsford and it crashed by
Oakhurst in New London Road
Sub Lieutenant Blake had become one of the last victims of
The Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain*





SECRET.

FORM F

COMBAT REPORT.

Sector Serial No. _____ (A) _____

Serial No. of Order detailing Flight or Squadron to
Patrol _____ (B) _____

Date _____ (C) September 9, 1940

Flight, Squadron _____ (D) Flight: A Sqdn.: 19.

Number of Enemy Aircraft _____ (E) 130

Type of Enemy Aircraft _____ (F) Me 109, 110, He III, Do 215s

Time Attack was delivered _____ (G) 18.00 hrs

Place Attack was delivered _____ (H) 5th Weald

Height of Enemy _____ (J) 20,000 ft

Enemy Casualties _____ (K) one HE III

Our Casualties _____ (L) Aircraft p. 9431 ✓ Damaged cat 4.
 Personnel _____ (M) unhurt.

GENERAL REPORT _____ (R) _____

I was Red two. Scrambled at 1700 hrs with both other Svdns.
 BZA flying N.W. over London initially. Large formation sighted
 at 20,000 ft. I attacked and in the ensuing dogfight that followed
 I didn't fire a round. So having turned myself inside out, I straight-
 ened up and followed the main enemy formation out to sea.
 I picked out a Heinkel III on the port side and behind the formation
 Made a shallow dive out of the sinking sun and carried out a stern
 attack. I saw bits flying off and as I broke off, observed him to
 be smoking and on fire. Aircraft then went down in a slow glide.
 I started back to rejoin went I was attacked by an unknown A/C.
 My windshield was shattered with pieces of glass every where and
 I dived to evade with further hits striking my A/C. I went into
 cloud and lost my pursuer. Instruments were playing up so I went
 back to base and landed safely. ✓

A. Blake
 A.G. Blake S/Lt. FAA.
 Signature

O.C. | Section RED TWO
 Flight
 Squadron



K.F.Porter
Basildon Borough Heritage Society
7th March 2020

