

## **Mistley Memorial Henry William Blake: 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> November 1914**

Henry William Blake was originally from Cheriton, near Alresford in Hampshire. By 1891, aged 6, he was living with his father Henry William Blake who worked as a Coachman, his mother Jemima June Blake, and sisters Florence (aged 5) and May (aged 3), in 5 Churchyard Cottages, Alresford.

By the time he was 16 years old he had left home and was living and working as a dairyman's assistant at 'The Dairy House' farm in Droxford, Hampshire.

By 1911 Henry was living and working at 49 Grosvenor Square, London as a Footman in the household of Edward Anthony Strauss, the Liberal Member of parliament for West Southwark.

His next move seems to have been to join the army going back to his roots, signing on in Winchester with the Hampshire Regiment, 1st Battalion as private 6583, a year or so before the war.

Originally based in Aldershot the regiment was moved to Colchester as part of a force to defend the east coast from invasion. This may be how he met Maud Frances Lucas who, though born in Romford in 1889, was from the well known Lucas family.



Her father George Henry Lucas was born in Mistley, her mother Frances, coming from Haynford in Norfolk. The couple lived for a while in Romford where Maud and her younger brother Harry were born. They moved back to the area where sister Nora was born. George Lucas worked as a painter at one of the Mistley maltings and when 16 yrs Harry also took a job at the Maltings as an assistant engine driver.

Henry and Maud married locally in early 1912.

After being relieved of their coastal defensive duties, by the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August the Hampshire 1st Battalion

were landing in Le Havre and fought at Le Cateau as part of the retreat from Mons. They were then part of the battle of the Marne and Aisne and the battle of Armentieres from 13<sup>th</sup> of October to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November. By this stage trench warfare had been

established and different techniques developed for defence on the line that locally ran from Armentiers just to the south, to Ypres in the north.

After three days out of the line, the last two weeks of November saw the Battalion back just inside the Belgium border, directly in front of Le Gheer crossroads, with Ploegsteert (known as Plug Street) wood behind them. Heavy rain reduced the trenches and dug-outs to a dreadful state, with most time and energy concentrated on rebuilding collapsed areas and strengthening the system, which was deep in viscous mud and full of water. Fighting was intermittent with the greatest danger being sniping on both sides, which killed 13 men and injured 39 others from the regiment. Henry was killed in action on either the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> November 1914 and is buried close by in the Lancashire Cottage Cemetery I. A. 10, one of many in the area. His battalion was one of those who later took part in the Christmas truce.

At the time of his death Maud Frances Blake was living at Rose Cottages, California Road, Mistley. Her younger brother Harry Lucas was killed in the war a couple years later (see below). She lived to 83 years and died in 1972 in the Braintree area.

Son of Henry & J Blake of Alresford Hampshire.

His Medal Index Card shows him being awarded the 1914 Star and Clasp, British War Medal and Victory Medal, entered Theatre  
24<sup>th</sup> August 1914.

Image kindly supplied by Glennice Jones