

ARTHUR GILES BLAKE

From the Historic England Research Records of HMS Daedalus Gosport Hampshire.

A former Royal Navy Air Service military airfield, used in both World Wars and post-war until 1996. It was established in 1917 as a seaplane training school, initially as satellite of Calshot. Hangars and slipways from this period are extant (please see SU 50 SE 33). This phase included the reuse of existing Victorian buildings. Between the wars the airfield was transferred to Royal Air Force control and was rebuilt after becoming Coastal Area headquarters in 1931, with more barracks being added in 1932-1935. A number of buildings dating to this phase are also extant. With the formation of the Fleet Air Arm, in 1939 the base reverted to Royal Navy Control. During the Battle of Britain Royal Navy fighter aircraft used the base to protect Southampton and Portsmouth, but it was also sometimes used by fighters of Royal Air Force 11 Group, who were heavily engaged in the battle.

By the end of World War Two HMS Daedalus was arguably the most important Royal Naval Air Station in the world. World War Two aircraft hangars are also extant. In the post-war period the base was mainly used for training. From 1969-1965 it operated in this role under the name HMS Ariel, then changing back to HMS Daedalus. After closure in 1996 the Ministry of Defence retained ownership over the site, which hosts a number of civil aircraft bodies and the Hampshire Constabulary's aviation section. The site is now a Conservation Area, comprising 100 acres of buildings and 382 acres of the former flying field.

HMS Daedalus, Gosport and Fareham, Hampshire. The airfield was established in 1917 as a seaplane training school, initially as satellite of Calshot. Between the wars the airfield was transferred to Royal Air Force control. With the formation of the Fleet Air Arm, in 1939 the base reverted to Royal Navy Control. By the end of World War Two HMS Daedalus was arguably the most important Royal Naval Air Station in the world. In the post-war period the base was mainly used for training. From 1969-1965 it operated in this role under the name HMS Ariel, then changing back to HMS Daedalus. After closure in 1996 the Ministry of Defence retained ownership over the site, which hosts a number of civil aircraft bodies and the Hampshire Constabulary's aviation section. The site is now a Conservation Area, comprising 100 acres of buildings mainly in the south of the site and 382 acres of the former flying field in the northern part of the site. The official web site includes a virtual tour of the base with photographs of the key buildings.

HMS Daedalus. The WWI phase included the reuse of existing (late Victorian) buildings such as Westcliffe House, Norbury House, Keith Cottages, and The Brambles. The base was rebuilt in 1931, with the new headquarters at Eagle Block ; there were some further additions (barracks, institute and guardhouse) in 1932-5 and in 1939. The Victorian Wykeham Hall was also adapted as a headquarters building in the 1930s. The source includes details of the most important individual buildings, many of which were recommended for consideration as possible future Listed Buildings.

For a detailed description of the site including plans, photographs and information on the squadrons please refer to this source.

Lee on Solent played a role during the Battle of Britain. It was actually principally a Royal Navy base during the Battle of Britain, used by Royal Navy fighters permanently stationed there for the defence of Portsmouth and Southampton. However it was also used on an ad hoc basis by fighter aircraft of RAF 11 Group who were detached there.

**Arthur Giles BLAKE, Sub-Lieutenant (Pilot), Royal Navy attached to 19 Squadron, Royal Air Force
Killed when his aircraft was shot down at New London Road, Chelmsford. Aged 23.**

Arthur Giles Blake was born in the North-East, educated at Slough Grammar School and was a graduate of the Royal Navy College. He served in the Fleet Air Arm and gained his 'wings' in January 1940. Five months later he was loaned to Royal Air Force. He shot down at least five German aircraft during the Battle of Britain. He was killed in October 1940 when his aircraft was shot down, crashing in New London Road, Chelmsford.

Arthur was born in Northumberland in 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 and went to the Royal Navy College. He joined the Fleet Air Arms and qualified as a pilot in January 1940.

Arthur served as a Sub Lieutenant (Pilot) with the Fleet Air Arm, Royal Navy.

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.

He was credited with shooting down at least five German aircraft, including an He111 on 9th September 1940, a Bf109 and a share of an He111 on 15th September 1940 and two Bf109s on 17th September 1940.

Arthur was killed on 29th October 1940 while still serving with 19 Squadron when his aircraft (number P7423 and markings QY-Y) was shot down by one or more German aircraft, and crashed at Oak Lodge in New London Road, Chelmsford at 5.12 pm.

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 which was flying a search role alone behind the rest of 19 Squadron. They had attacked the most vulnerable aircraft.

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.

Arthur Giles Blake was born in 1917 in Northumberland and educated at Slough Grammar School. He passed through the Royal Naval College, Greenwich and joined the Fleet Air Arm, gained his wings in January 1940. His first posting was HMS Daedalus, a shore station at Lee-on-Solent in Hampshire.

On 15th June 1940 he was one of the FAA pilots attached to the RAF and he first attended 7 OTU, Hawarden, to convert to Spitfires. On 1st July 1940 Blake joined 19 Squadron at Duxford, where his colleagues gave him the nickname 'Admiral'.

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 Me109's.



Blake 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, flew on for some time before crashing in London Road, Chelmsford.

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 Sqn. : 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 _____ Aircraft p 9431 (L) Damaged cat 4.
 Personnel _____ (M) unhurt.
 (R) _____

GENERAL REPORT.

I was Red two. Scrambled at 1700 hrs with both other Svdns. 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 straightened 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 when 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.

Signature

A.G. Blake S/Lt. FAA.

O.C.

Section RED TWO
Flight
Squadron





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.