



A Burial Service for

**Private Reginald Joseph Blake
11th Battalion The Essex Regiment**

**10:45 hours on Wednesday 22 April 2026
CWGC Loos British Cemetery Extension, France**

**Service conducted by the Reverend Joseph Roberts CF
Chaplain to 1st Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment
Déroulement de la cérémonie présidé par
le Révérend Joseph Roberts CF**

Private Reginald Joseph Blake



Private Reginald Joseph Blake, known as Joe to his family, was born on 14 April 1897 in Tendring, Essex. He was one of seven children born to Ernest Frederick William Blake and his second wife Caroline. Joe also had three older half siblings from his father's first marriage. Following the outbreak of the First World War, he enlisted into The Essex Regiment at Dovercourt. He was posted to 11th Battalion.

The War Diaries of 11th Battalion The Essex Regiment record that on 22 April 1917, they took part in an attack north of Lens. The assaulting companies left the frontline in Novel Alley, assaulting on a front of 350 yards. C Company which was in reserve, moved up into Novel Alley as B and D Companies moved off and A Company remained in reserve.

B Company, to which Private Blake belonged, reached its objective but encountered opposition. D Company also reached its objective and attacked along Nash Alley. Severe fighting followed and when their supply of bombs had run out, they were forced to retire. A platoon from C Company and three platoons of A Company were brought into action. At 16:00 hours a heavy enemy bombardment of the area commenced causing severe casualties, around ten Officers and 250 other ranks. It was during this action that Private Blake went missing. He was 20 years old. As he was missing, Private Blake was commemorated on the Loos Memorial.

On 25 February 2020, the remains of a soldier were discovered during work to clear ordnance from the site where a new hospital was to be constructed on the edge of Lens. He was found with shoulder titles and a cap badge of The Essex Regiment and was one of several men of the regiment found at the site. An Anthropology Report highlighted that this casualty was likely to be young, which narrowed down the potential list of candidates. After further research by the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre, DNA testing was carried out, eventually leading to the identification of the remains as Private

Reginald Joseph Blake. Today we will remember Private Blake and he will be laid to rest alongside his comrades.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Loos British Cemetery Extension was opened by H.R.H. The Princess Royal on 26 September 2024, and is only the second new cemetery established by the CWGC since the work to construct the Second World War cemeteries and Memorials was completed. It has been designed to be in keeping with the Commission's First World War cemeteries in France. It provides a fitting place of burial for those Commonwealth casualties still being recovered today from the former battlefields across France, including Private Reginald Blake, who is being buried here today.

Private Reginald Joseph Blake, connu sous le nom de Joe par sa famille, est né le 14 avril 1897 à Tendring, dans l'Essex. Il était l'un des sept enfants nés à Ernest Frederick William Blake et de sa deuxième épouse Caroline. Joe avait également trois demi-frères et sœurs aînés issus du premier mariage de son père. Après le déclenchement de la Première Guerre mondiale, il s'est enrôlé dans Le Essex Regiment à Dovercourt. Il a été affecté au 11^e Bataillon.

Les journaux de guerre du 11^e Bataillon du Essex Regiment indiquent que le 22 avril 1917, ils ont participé à une attaque au nord de Lens. Les compagnies d'assaut ont quitté la ligne de front à Novel Alley et ont attaqué sur un front de 350 mètres. C Company, qui était en réserve, s'est avancée dans Novel Alley tandis que les B et D Companies se déplaçaient et que la A Company restait en réserve.

B Company, à laquelle appartenait Private Blake, atteignit son objectif mais rencontra une opposition. D Company atteignit également son objectif et attaqua le long de Nash Alley. De violents combats s'ensuivirent et, lorsque leurs réserves de

bombes furent épuisées, ils furent contraints de battre en retraite. Une section de C Company et trois sections de A Company furent ensuite engagés dans l'action. À 16:00 heures, un bombardement intense de la zone par l'ennemi a causé de lourdes pertes, environ dix officiers et 250 soldats. C'est au cours de cette action que Private Blake est disparu. Il avait 20 ans. Comme il était porté disparu, Private Blake a été commémoré au mémorial de Loos.

Le 25 février 2020, les restes d'un soldat ont été découverts lors de travaux de déminage sur le site où un nouvel hôpital devait être construit à la périphérie de Lens. Il a été retrouvé avec des insignes d'épaule et un insigne de casquette du Essex Regiment et était l'un des nombreux hommes du régiment retrouvés sur le site. Un rapport anthropologique a souligné que cette victime était probablement jeune, ce qui a permis de réduire la liste des candidats potentiels. Après des recherches supplémentaires menées par le Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre, des tests ADN ont été effectués, qui ont finalement permis d'identifier les restes comme étant ceux du Private Reginald Joseph Blake. Aujourd'hui, nous nous souviendrons Private Blake, il sera inhumé aux côtés de ses camarades.

Call to Worship

Appel à Adoration

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
And the love of God
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with you all.

All **Amen.**

We gather here today in the solemn peace of Loos British Cemetery to welcome home Private Reginald Joseph Blake of The Essex Regiment, a soldier of the Great War whose life was given in service more than a century ago. After many years lying unknown on the battlefield, his remains have been found, his identity restored, and today we honour him by name, giving him the dignity, recognition, and rest he has so long been owed.

Joe served in a conflict that reshaped nations and scarred landscapes, and he fell on ground not far from where we stand. Though he was lost to time, he was never lost to history, nor to the enduring care of those who commit themselves to remembering the fallen. His return to us today is an act of grace and of gratitude: a reminder that every soldier matters, every life has value, and every sacrifice deserves remembrance.

Today we welcome him among comrades, laid to rest with honour beneath the quiet guardianship of this cemetery. We give thanks for his courage and his service, and we commend him into God's keeping with the assurance that he is known, cherished, and loved.

May this act of burial bring comfort to all who remember him, pride to all who wear the badge of The Essex Regiment, and renewed commitment in each of us to

work for the peace for which he and so many others gave their lives. Thus, committing ourselves to 'never forget'.

Bidding Prayer

Prière

Let us recall the presence of God, maker and sustainer of all that is, whose purposes are good, whose love is never withheld and whose mercy never passes away. We call to mind God's faithfulness, care and presence with us, through times of darkness and despair, conflict, death and mourning.

We remember before God, Private Reginald Joseph Blake, and all who have served in the Armed Forces of our nation; who counted service to others greater than service of self, and who gave their lives in battle.

All **God of peace and hope,
we give thanks for the life of Joe,
for his service, his courage,
and for the blessing of laying his body to rest.
Grant him eternal peace
and strengthen our commitment
to work for justice, harmony,
and peace in our own day.
May his sacrifice never be forgotten,
and may your light shine upon him and upon us all.
Amen.**

Reading

Lecture

Read by a Representative of the British Embassy Paris

Albums

By Drummer Carr of 15th Battalion The Essex Regiment–
December 1917

We may write our names in albums,
We may write them in the sand,
Or chisel them in marble,
With a firm and steady hand,
But soon the pages are sullied,
Soon each name will fade away,
Every monument will crumble,
While all earthly hopes decay,
But "Dear May" there is an album,
Full of leaves of snowy white,
Where no name is ever tarnished,
But forever pure and bright,
In that book of life "Lords Album",
May your name be penned with care,
And all those in years who write it,
Write their names forever there.

Scripture Reading

Lecture des Écritures Saintes

Read by Captain Oliver White

1st Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment

Ephesians Chapter 6 v 10-17 (NIV)

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

This is the Word of the Lord.

All **Thanks be to God.**

Address

Allocution

Blessing of the Grave

Bénédiction de la Tombe

O God of infinite mercy and compassion,
we bless this grave
and set apart this resting place
for your servant Joe,
a faithful soldier of The Essex Regiment.
As the earth receives his mortal remains,
grant him the peace he was denied in death,
the honour owed to his sacrifice,
and the rest promised to all who place their hope in you.

May this grave be a place of remembrance and gratitude,
where future generations recall
the cost of conflict
and the courage of those who served.
Surround this ground with your protection,
fill it with your peace,
and keep us mindful of the hope of the resurrection,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Commendation and Committal

L'Enterrement

Into your arms Gracious God,
we commend our brother Private Reginald Joseph Blake
to your eternal keeping,
trusting that no life is lost to you,
no act of courage forgotten,
and no child of yours beyond the reach of your love.
Grant him rest in your nearer presence
where there is no more death or sorrow or crying or pain
but only eternal peace with you.

We therefore commit his earthly remains
to this hallowed ground,
reunited with comrades
who also paid the ultimate cost of sacrifice,
earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust...

Joe, as you rest in eternal belonging,
and have left the shadows of this world behind,
rise on the wings of the morning.
As we let go of you now,
may you rest in peace.

All **Amen.**

The Exhortation

L'Éxhortation

Read by Warrant Officer Class 2 Hugh Murphy
1st Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.

All **We will remember them.**

Last Post

Sonnerie aux Morts

Played by Lance Corporal April Farthing
The Band of The Royal Yorkshire Regiment

Silence

Reveille

Kohima Epitaph

L'Épitaphe de Kohima

Read by a Soldier of the Bearer Party

When you go home tell them of us and say:
'For your tomorrow, we gave our today.'

Laying of Wreaths

Dépôts des Gerbes

Prayers

Prières

Loving God, we give thanks for the life of Joe,
for his courage, his sacrifice,
and for all who, in times of war,
offered themselves in the cause of peace and freedom.
Lord, in your mercy:

All **Hear our prayer.**

We remember with particular gratitude
his service in The Essex Regiment –
a regiment marked by steadfast duty,
great endurance and bravery.
May the spirit of the regiment
be honoured today in the telling of Joe's story
and in the thankfulness of all who served
and still serve in the Pompadours.

Lord, in your mercy:

All **Hear our prayer.**

We recall with solemn respect
Joe's part in the Battle of Arras
and on 21 April 1917,
a time of fierce struggle and heavy cost,
for the comrades who fought beside him,
for those who did not return,
and for all who bore the weight of that battle.
We offer our prayers of remembrance and gratitude.
Lord, in your mercy:

All **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for Joe's family –
those who mourned without knowing,
those who hoped without answer,
and those who now receive the gift of certainty.
May they be comforted by your healing presence.
Lord, in your mercy.

All **Hear our prayer.**

We remember all who fell in the First World War,
and all victims of conflict, past and present.
Grant that the lessons of history
may lead the nations of the world
into the ways of reconciliation and peace.
Lord, in your mercy:

All **Hear our prayer.**

And as we honour Joe's memory,
renew in us the resolve
to seek justice, mercy, and peace in our own time,
that we may live to your glory
and serve one another in your name.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer
Prière du Seigneur

Uniting all our thoughts and prayers,
we pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

All **Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Collect of The Essex Regiment

Récitation du Essex Regiment

Read by Karen Dennis

Essex Branch of the Western Front Association

O Lord, our stony rock and our defence, hear us, we pray
thee, thy servants of The Essex Regiment, and ever bear
us as on eagles' wings in the faith and truth of him who is
our shield and buckler, Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Blessing

Séparation de Dernière Bénédiction

God grant to the living, grace;
to the departed, rest;
to the Church, The King, the Commonwealth,
and all people,
unity peace and concord;
and to us and all God's servants,
life everlasting;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always.

All **Amen.**



The Ministry of Defence, through the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre, is responsible for the research, identification and burial of all British casualties worldwide.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for the graves, memorials, records and memory of the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two World Wars.

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