

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Captain Leslie Russell Blake, MC, MID

(1890 – 1918)

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Captain Leslie Russel Blake, Antarctic explorer and geologist, Military Cross, Mentioned in Despatches, died of wounds 3 October 1918 and is buried in Tincourt New British Cemetery, Tincourt, Picardie, France.

Blake was a member of the Australian Antarctic Expedition 1911-14 with Douglas Mawson and was involved in the survey of Macquarie Island, the harvesting of penguins for oil and the collection of geological specimens. A geologists' and cartographer, he obtained leave from the Geological Survey Department of Brisbane to accompany the Expedition. He was one of the five who stayed another year at Macquarie Island.

At 24 years of age, Leslie Blake enlisted into the AIF at Gympie, Queensland on 4 August 1915. He sailed to Suez in the Middle East as a reinforcement to 22nd Howitzer Brigade and was allotted to 105th Battery on 11 March 1916, three days before his unit departed for France.

Blake received a field commission on 14 October 1916 and was awarded the Military Cross for 'conspicuous gallantry in action' for obtaining and bringing back information when a reconnaissance officer under heavy fire.

Early in 1917 Lt Blake became a staff officer on Headquarters 2nd Division Artillery. He was wounded in action on 27 September that year but remained on duty. Two days later he sustained a severe gunshot wound to his right arm and was evacuated to hospital in England. It was three months before he was rehabilitated but carried the legacy of some disability in his right arm.

It was now the end of 1917 and it is assumed that when Blake returned to France, he went back to his parent 105th Howitzer Battery. In May 1918, Captain Blake was directing the ammunition wagons near a railway in a laying position in the vicinity of Hargicourt. It is reported that suddenly he was struck by shellfire, had his leg blown off and his eye damaged. His horse was killed from under him. Blake was evacuated to the 58th Casualty Clearing Station where he died early the next morning.